

Mayhem 161

Chapter 161 – Proposition (1)

‘S-Senior brother?’

‘Huh? Grand Leader Woo?’

The person lifted by Mok Gyeong-un’s hand was none other than Woo Horang, the chief disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun and one of the Five Tigers, known as the top successors of the Heaven and Earth Society.

He was known to be someone that only executives could handle, yet seeing him unconscious and covered in blood, as if he had suffered serious injuries, the disciple pair Yeop Wi-seon and Transient Sword Group’s leader Yang Il couldn’t hide their shock.

‘What’s going on?’

Why was their senior brother in such a state?

Yeop Wi-seon had never seen his senior brother defeated by someone before.

Yeop Wi-seon’s gaze momentarily turned towards Mok Gyeong-un.

‘No. Absolutely not.’

For a moment, he wondered if it was Mok Gyeong-un’s doing.

But that couldn’t be.

He had sparred with him before, so he knew his martial prowess.

He believed Mok Gyeong-un was either at the pinnacle of Peak Realm or slightly above it.

But for him to reduce his senior brother, who had reached the Peak Realm, to such a state?

It was absurd.

But then,

-Thud!

Transient Sword Group's leader Yang Il dropped the large stone he had placed on the short sword's blade and spoke with a gaze filled with wariness.

"Mok Gyeong-un. Is this your doing?"

'Huh?'

Now what was this about?

No matter how much that damned bastard possessed decent martial prowess that even their lord, Wi So-yeon, showed interest in, he didn't have the ability to handle their senior brother.

"Brother Yang. That bastard's martial prowess is similar to mine. He's not capable of being an opponent for our senior brother."

"What are you talking about? Brother Yeop. That Mok Gyeong-un has reached the Peak Realm, just like the Grand Leader of the Geo Gwal."

'!?'

At Yang Il's words, Yeop Wi-seon showed a dumbfounded expression.

Was he mocking him now?

It hadn't even been half a month since he had encountered the bastard at the Corpse Blood Valley.

But in that time, by what means had he reached the Peak Realm?

"Are you mocking me now? I've sparred with that bastard before..."

"It's not a joke. Our lord personally said so, and Jang Neung-ak, the Society Leader's second disciple, also acknowledged his martial prowess."

"...What?"

What?

Even their lord and Jang Neung-ak acknowledged it?

What in the world was going on?

Did this make any sense?

How could he have reached the Peak Realm in such a short time since they had sparred at the Corpse Blood Valley's non-stick pot?

It was impossible to believe.

As he was perplexed, Mok Gyeong-un said with a smile,

“I’ll return him to you.”

“What?”

“Your senior brother. Take him.”

“W-Wait. What are you trying to...”

-Whoosh!

Before Yeop Wi-seon could finish his words, Mok Gyeong-un casually tossed the unconscious Woo Horang, whom he had been holding with one hand, towards Yeop Wi-seon as if he were a piece of luggage.

Woo Horang’s considerably large body flew towards Yeop Wi-seon at a fast speed.

“Y-You bastard?”

Yeop Wi-seon hurriedly spread his arms to catch Woo Horang.

He drew upon a suitable amount of martial power, intending to stably receive his senior brother, but...

-Bang!

“Ugh!”

The moment he caught Woo Horang’s body, the weight of the martial power contained within caused Yeop Wi-seon’s knees to buckle.

Along with that, Yeop Wi-seon's feet...

-Skid skid skid skid!

Slid across the courtyard's ground, being pushed back by about eight steps.

Even this was only possible because he had gritted his teeth and endured it by drawing upon his tenth-level martial power halfway through.

Although it had happened in an instant, it felt quite lengthy to Yeop Wi-seon.

"Haa... Haa..."

-Thud!

Yeop Wi-seon's breathing became ragged as he struggled to set Woo Horang on the ground.

'What? What was that?'

What had just happened was the subtle principle of Transferring Flowers and Connecting Wood.

If the orthodox method was to utilize the opponent's energy, transmitting energy to the opponent by imbuing it into something was also an application of Transferring Flowers and Connecting Wood.

This was also called the technique of Striking Objects to Transmit Energy.

'...It's impossible.'

This level of advanced subtle principle was not something that a martial artist who had reached the Peak Realm could execute.

It was a technique that could only be used by those who had ascended to the Peak Realm and possessed a high level of understanding of energy.

Yeop Wi-seon found it difficult to accept even after experiencing it firsthand.

There was anger towards the bastard, but this was also something that was impossible by common sense.

How could he have gained enlightenment and reached a higher realm than himself in such a short time?

As he was perplexed, Yang Il asked,

“Was that just now Striking Objects to Transmit Energy? Brother Yeop, are you alright?”

“...I’m fine.”

Although he had learned that the bastard’s inner energy was extraordinary through the Striking Objects to Transmit Energy technique, he had not suffered internal injuries.

He just felt unsettled and dirty.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un spoke,

“That person. His acupoints have been sealed, so you’ll need to release them for him to regain consciousness.”

“What? You’re saying you sealed our senior brother’s acupoints?”

“No. I didn’t do it.”

‘!?’

At Mok Gyeong-un’s denial, Transient Sword Group’s leader Yang Il asked in puzzlement,

“Then, if it wasn’t you, Mok Gyeong-un, but someone else who sealed his acupoints, does that mean that person is the one who reduced the Grand Leader of the Geo Gwal to this state?”

“Ah. That’s not it. It’s true that he ended up like this after fighting me.”

“Are you trying to play word games with us, you bastard?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Yeop Wi-seon shouted, his anger boiling over.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged and said,

“It’s the truth. And why would I joke with you?”

“Joke? Ha! I get it now.”

“What do you mean?”

“Seeing that someone else sealed his acupoints, you ganged up on our senior brother and overwhelmed him.”

“...”

“It makes sense. No matter how rapidly your martial arts have progressed, how could a bastard like you defeat our senior brother, one of the Five Tigers, alone?”

‘Hmm.’

At Yeop Wi-seon’s heated exclamation, Yang Il also glanced at Mok Gyeong-un with a skeptical gaze.

In fact, their lord, Wi So-yeon, had said that Mok Gyeong-un’s martial prowess seemed to be at the beginning of the Peak Realm.

That was why she had sent not Yang Il, whose martial prowess was similar to Mok Gyeong-un’s, but Woo Horang, who possessed the highest martial prowess among her subordinates.

But if their lord’s judgment was accurate, no matter how one thought about it, Mok Gyeong-un’s martial prowess alone couldn’t have defeated Woo Horang.

‘The gap between the beginning and the pinnacle of Peak Realm is significant.’

Yang Il himself had also sparred with Woo Horang and lost, so he had experienced that gap firsthand.

The title of the Five Tigers was not something anyone could receive.

Wasn’t Woo Horang a monster among the successors who were known to be unrivaled by anyone except the executives?

In that case, Yeop Wi-seon’s words about a joint attack also made sense.

‘...Could it be that he has joined hands with them?’

In fact, what their lord, Wi So-yeon, had been concerned about was Mok Gyeong-un entering under the faction of Jang Neung-ak, the Society Leader’s second disciple.

Judging from Jang Neung-ak's attitude, he already seemed to be quite close to Mok Gyeong-un.

'Ah!'

Yang Il's eyes widened as if he had realized something, and he whispered to Yeop Wi-seon,

"I think Brother Yeop is right."

"What do you mean by that?"

"I heard that one of Jang Neung-ak's close subordinates, Woo Maeng-chun of the Two Peaks, was murdered last night."

"What?"

At this, Yeop Wi-seon's eyes widened.

What in the world had happened while he was in secluded training?

Yang Il continued,

"I thought it was strange that Jang Neung-ak kept glaring at our lord and Grand Leader Woo with eyes full of killing intent at the Baek Clan's residence."

"Ha! Then there's no doubt that the bastard hostage of the righteous faction and Jang Neung-ak's subordinates ganged up on our senior brother and reduced him to this state."

"..."

-Those foolish persons. What nonsense are they spouting?

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

There was no way they couldn't hear him even if they whispered.

He hadn't said a word, yet they were piecing together the situation in their own way.

It was him who had killed Woo Maeng-chun, Jang Neung-ak's close subordinate, and it was also him who had reduced Woo Horang, Wi So-yeon's subordinate, to this state, but there was no connection between the two incidents.

However, it was quite amusing to see them linking unrelated incidents together.

'They're fun to play with.'

That was the extent of Mok Gyeong-un's judgment.

But now, he had no business with them.

"You two. If you want to continue your conversation, go ahead. I'm here to see Young Lady Wi So-yeon. She's inside the main hall, right?"

Mok Gyeong-un tried to take a step forward.

At that moment,

-Shing!

Yeop Wi-seon drew his unique weapon, the Geo-hyeong-do, which he had been carrying on his back.

Then, he aimed the tip of the blade at Mok Gyeong-un and shouted,

“How dare you try to meet the lady with those filthy feet?”

“You’re really making this troublesome.”

“What?”

“I haven’t agreed to your interesting speculation, so why don’t you just release that person’s acupoints and confirm it directly?”

Mok Gyeong-un tried to take another step forward.

At that instant, a sharp murderous intent rose from the ground just three steps ahead of Mok Gyeong-un, drawing a line.

-Swish!

The one who drew that line was none other than Transient Sword Group’s leader, Yang Il.

With his sword radiating murderous intent, ready to strike at any moment, Yang Il warned,

“Abandon any thoughts of crossing that line.”

At his strong warning, Yeop Wi-seon thought it was fortunate.

He had already judged that he had no chance in a one-on-one confrontation due to Mok Gyeong-un’s sudden advancement.

However, the situation was different if they fought together.

Transient Sword Group's leader, Yang Il, was an outstanding talent who had reached the beginning of the Peak Realm.

Excluding their senior brother, he could be considered the left arm of their lord, Wi So-yeon.

If they fought together, the advantage would be theirs.

'That son of a bitch. Perfect.'

Moreover, back then, he had been careful not to fully unleash his techniques because they were inside the treasure-filled Corpse Blood Valley.

But now, it was different.

In this spacious courtyard, he could use his full power.

"Brother Yang... I'll join you."

-Step!

Yeop Wi-seon stood beside Transient Sword Group's leader Yang Il and assumed a starting stance.

A joint attack might be cowardly, but they had sufficient justification.

After all, there was suspicion that the bastard had also used a joint attack against their senior brother.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un waved his hand lightly, as if he found it bothersome, and said,

“Let’s stop this. I didn’t come here to fight, but to see Young Lady Wi So-yeon.”

“Shut up! Do you think our lord would meet with a mere hostage of the righteous faction?”

“That’s strange. From what I remember your senior brother saying, Young Lady Wi So-yeon had summoned me. Isn’t that right?”

“That’s...”

The answer to this came from Yang Il, who was standing next to him.

“She did summon you. Because our lord highly values you. But do you think we’ll let you meet the lady so casually after you’ve seriously injured the Grand Leader of the Geo Gwal, who went to fetch you?”

“You’re not making sense. Then why don’t you just wake up that person and ask him directly?”

“What?”

“You keep talking as if I was the one who attacked him first, so why don’t you release his acupoints and directly... Ah, no.”

Mok Gyeong-un stopped mid-sentence and shook his head.

Then, he said to them,

“Why don’t you two just attack me together?”

“What?”

“You’re telling us to attack together?”

“Didn’t you hear me? I said it would be better if I defeat both of you and go. That way, even the lady will feel the impact.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Transient Sword Group’s leader Yang Il’s eyes sharpened.

Unlike Yeop Wi-seon’s words, he had no intention of launching a joint attack or attacking Mok Gyeong-un first.

He still couldn’t be sure about the truth.

However, as a martial artist, such provocation was quite irritating.

“Are you underestimating me and Brother Yeop?”

“Underestimate? Of course not.”

“Then why are you telling us to attack simultaneously?”

At Yang Il’s question, Mok Gyeong-un replied with a smile,

“It’s bothersome to deal with you one by one, and you’re not at a high enough level, so I’m telling you to attack together.”

-Grit!

Yang Il gritted his teeth.

He usually responded calmly to provocations.

However, he was already quite displeased by the statement that Mok Gyeong-un had defeated Woo Horang, who was like their eldest brother, so when Mok Gyeong-un provoked him like this, he couldn't endure it.

"Is that so? Then let's see how strong you are!"

-Whoosh!

Yang Il launched his figure towards Mok Gyeong-un.

Likewise, Yeop Wi-seon, who was angry at Mok Gyeong-un's provocation and had been waiting for an opportunity to launch a joint attack, kicked off the ground in sync with Yang Il and launched his figure.

'Chohaemujunggeom's 4th stance, Gathering Shadows and Marking Promises!'

'Renowned Sun Blade Technique's 2nd hidden stance, Proclaiming Harm and Recounting Faults!'

Yang Il and Yeop Wi-seon simultaneously swung their sword and blade, attempting to unleash their ultimate techniques.

It was at that very moment.

-Swish!

-Clang!

'No way?'

'Gasp!'

In an instant, Mok Gyeong-un's figure blurred and reappeared in front of them, his hands already grasping the blades of their sword and blade before they could even execute their ultimate techniques.

'!!!!!!!'

Both Yang Il and Yeop Wi-seon couldn't hide their bewilderment at what had happened in a single moment.

What in the world was going on?

They couldn't even see his movements.

-Crack!

'W-What strength?'

'I can't pull out the blade...'

They tried to draw upon their martial power to pull out their sword and blade, but they wouldn't budge.

To them, Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said,

"You're slow."

"You bastard!"

-Whoosh!

Yang Il released the sword he was holding and gathered his index and middle fingers, raising murderous intent to pierce Mok Gyeong-un's Adam's apple.

However,

-Thud!

Before he could do so, Mok Gyeong-un's kick struck his head.

Along with his brain being shaken, Yang Il's eyes rolled back, and he slumped to the ground.

-Thud!

"You didn't expect me to just wait for you to hit me, did you?"

Mok Gyeong-un sneered at the unconscious Yang Il.

Seeing this scene, Yeop Wi-seon was so shocked that his face turned pale, and his hands and feet began to tremble.

What the hell was this?

Wasn't he someone who had been almost evenly matched with him not long ago?

But how had he become this strong?

Although Yang Il was at the beginning stage, he had reached the Peak Realm, so even Woo Horang, one of the Five Tigers, couldn't defeat him in an instant like this.

"Y-You bastard, just what..."

“If you know you can’t match me in skill, wouldn’t it be better to politely step aside?”

-Grip!

At Mok Gyeong-un’s arrogant words, Yeop Wi-seon bit his lip hard.

He had already experienced that he was no match for Mok Gyeong-un when he used the Striking Objects to Transmit Energy technique.

But he didn’t want to show any weakness to this bastard.

At this, Yeop Wi-seon abruptly swung a fist at Mok Gyeong-un and shouted,

“You son of a bitch...”

-Smack!

“Ack!”

The fist didn’t even touch him.

Before he could even finish his words, Mok Gyeong-un grabbed Yeop Wi-seon’s neck and lifted him up.

Then, with an eerie smile, he said to the struggling Yeop Wi-seon,

“Don’t use such strong language. It makes you look weak.”

-Shudder!

For a moment, goosebumps rose from Yeop Wi-seon's spine, and his eyes reddened with fear.

It was at that very moment.

"Stop!"

The sound of someone's shout was heard.

The owner of that shout was none other than,

'Y-Young Lady?'

Wi So-yeon, the Society Leader's third disciple.

She had emerged from the main hall building and was looking at Mok Gyeong-un with surprised eyes.

Chapter 162 – Proposition (2)

If one were to pick the most outstanding subordinate among the followers of the Society Leader's third disciple, Wi So-yeon, it would undoubtedly be Woo Ho-rang, the chief disciple of Bright Blade King Son Yun and the leader of the Giant Watchtower Group.

His martial arts prowess was recognized by all, as he was included among the Five Tigers, known as the best late-stage Masters of the Heaven and Earth Society.

However, the person she confided in the most among her followers was Gi Ok-ryeon, a fellow woman.

Gi Ok-ryeon was the eldest daughter of Sun Rock Valley Master Gi Hae and Wi So-yeon's closest friend and true right-hand woman.

-Swish!

Gi Ok-ryeon pulled out a needle from the back of Wi So-yeon, who had her upper body clothes pulled down, exposing half her back.

The sharp tip of the needle she pulled out had turned black.

“As I thought, there was still some poison remaining. But seeing only a part of the needle discolored, it seems the detoxification is almost complete. Young Lady, are you feeling better now?”

“Thanks to you.”

The Sun Rock Valley Master was skilled in medical arts, so Gi Ok-ryeon had also inherited that ability.

Thus, she had helped to quickly expel the remaining poisons left in Wi So-yeon’s body using acupuncture.

“The poison of the Elder Poison King must be truly formidable. In terms of internal energy alone, you should be no less than Elder Poison King, Young Lady.”

“Perhaps not anymore.”

“Ah... You’ve crossed the threshold.”

It was truly ironic.

On the day they visited, Poison King Baek Sa-ha had reached the Transformation Realm.

As a result, his importance had increased significantly.

If Poison King Baek Sa-ha, now a master of the Transformation Realm, supported them, it would be equivalent to gaining an army of thousands.

However, the key was how to bring him over to their side.

‘Mok Gyeong-un...’

It had become difficult to persuade Poison King Baek Sa-ha directly.

Therefore, currently, the only route to gain Baek Sa-ha’s support was through Mok Gyeong-un.

This was because Baek Sa-ha had accepted Mok Gyeong-un as his disciple.

As a result, Mok Gyeong-un’s value had risen tremendously.

Mok Gyeong-un was the joint disciple of Shadow Clan Master and Poison King, so if they could bring him under their wing, they would be able to draw in both Shadow Clan and Baek Clan.

They had to bring him in at all costs, but she was inwardly worried.

“I’m concerned that the Second Senior Brother might resort to underhanded means.”

“Second Young Master?”

“Yes.”

“...It’s because of that incident, isn’t it?”

“Right. Second Senior Brother’s anger seemed immense.”

“Even so, would he openly do something? It’s not like we were the ones responsible, as you said.”

“When the roots of suspicion run deep, one becomes blind to reason.”

“That may be true, but... Sigh. I don’t understand why this misfortune has befallen us. Why did such a thing suddenly happen, causing us to be suspected in this way...? Wait a moment... Young Lady, could this be a scheme to drive a wedge between us?”

Gi Ok-ryeon raised a question.

At her words, Wi So-yeon’s eyes narrowed.

That was because Wi Maeng-cheon, a trusted subordinate of Second Senior Brother Jang Neung-ak from the Five Evils Association, had been assassinated by someone the previous night.

This had greatly angered Second Senior Brother.

Although he was bedridden, their Master still had his eyes wide open, so until now, there had been no incidents of the three disciples crossing the line or clashing significantly.

However, that balance had now been shattered.

Given Second Senior Brother’s temperament, having lost a cherished subordinate, he would undoubtedly seek revenge in some way.

But the important thing here was that this was not their doing.

“Why do you think it’s a scheme to drive a wedge between us?”

“Isn’t it obvious? Due to Wi Maeng-cheon’s death, we are now under suspicion from Second Young Master. If this continues, we will inevitably clash.”

“So you think it’s a scheme to drive a wedge between us?”

“What else could it be?”

“If it is indeed such a scheme... whose doing do you think it is?”

In response to Wi So-yeon’s question, Gi Ok-ryeon answered with a confident voice.

“Isn’t it most likely the Eldest Young Master or his subordinates?”

“First Senior Brother?”

“Yes. They are the only ones who stand to benefit from this situation.”

“...”

At Gi Ok-ryeon’s words, Wi So-yeon rested her chin on her clasped hands.

If one only considered the circumstances, the probability of it being First Senior Brother, as she speculated, was indeed high.

After all, they were truly not responsible.

However,

“...Is it really First Senior Brother?”

“What?”

“It seems a bit different from First Senior Brother’s style.”

“Different, you say? If not the Eldest Young Master, there would be no reason for anyone else to do such a thing. It must be a ploy to make us and Second Young Master’s factions fight.”

Wi So-yeon shook her head slightly at Gi Ok-ryeon’s words.

Of course, there was some truth to her words.

This was because the reason Second Senior Brother suspected her instead of First Senior Brother for the death of his subordinate Wi Maeng-cheon, and the reason she found the situation itself suspicious, overlapped.

That reason was,

‘First Senior Brother... First Senior Brother doesn’t even consider us as rivals.’

If he had, he would have tried to keep them in check somehow in the past.

First Senior Brother was thorough, so if he considered someone an enemy, he would thoroughly crush them.

Yet, he had simply observed as if watching from the sidelines as they gathered supporters to become the successor.

He did not interfere at all.

Even though it could have made him uncomfortable.

'If First Senior Brother had been determined to suppress us, he wouldn't have left us alone like this until now.'

First Senior Brother Na Yul-ryang was somehow different from ordinary people.

Conversing with him made one feel inexplicably suffocated and even fearful.

That was why she had avoided meeting him since their Master had taken to his sickbed.

This would be the same for Second Senior Brother Jang Neung-ak.

Apart from their Master, the person he feared the most was none other than First Senior Brother.

At this, Wi So-yeon cautiously spoke.

"Perhaps an unexpected variable has emerged..."

-Startled!

At that moment, Wi So-yeon suddenly stopped speaking and looked somewhere.

Gi Ok-ryeon asked in puzzlement.

"Young Lady?"

"Something has happened outside."

“Something?”

“Quickly remove the remaining needles.”

“Y-Yes.”

Gi Ok-ryeon hastily removed all the needles stuck in Wi So-yeon’s acupoints.

After swiftly putting on her top and adjusting her clothes, Wi So-yeon hurriedly opened the door and went outside.

Of course, Gi Ok-ryeon followed behind her.

Hearing the commotion from outside, Wi So-yeon, who had come out, couldn’t hide her surprise at the scene unfolding before her eyes.

‘!?’

-Thud! Crash!

Yang Il, the young sect leader of the Transient Sword Group, collapsed after being hit by Mok Gyeong-un’s kick in an instant.

Gi Ok-ryeon, who followed behind, was equally surprised.

Who was Yang Il?

In terms of martial arts, he was the second-ranked expert among Wi So-yeon’s subordinates, at the early stage of the Transcendent Realm.

Yet, he was taken out with a single strike?

‘Impossible.’

How could this happen?

Then, someone else caught Gi Ok-ryeon’s eye.

It was none other than,

‘S-Senior Brother Woo?’

Woo Ho-rang.

He was lying on the ground, covered in blood, as if he had been severely injured.

‘Why is Senior Brother Woo like this?’

Gi Ok-ryeon, who had secretly been in love with him for a long time, was startled by this sight and tried to run out immediately.

Wi So-yeon stopped her by extending her hand.

After holding back Gi Ok-ryeon, Wi So-yeon shouted in a loud voice.

“Stop!”

Wi So-yeon’s shout resonated far and wide.

At her shout, Mok Gyeong-un, who was gripping Yeop Wi-seon's neck, turned his head.

"Ah. You've come out."

"You... What is this rampage?"

In response to her question, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders and replied.

"Rampage? I simply came because the Young Lady called for me, but these people tried to stop me."

Mok Gyeong-un pointed with his eyes, first at Yang Il, who was unconscious on the ground, and then at Yeop Wi-seon, whose neck was grasped in his hand.

"Ack, ack."

Yeop Wi-seon struggled with a distressed expression, his face turning red as if it would burst from the bulging veins.

Wi So-yeon pointed at him with her finger and said.

"Let go of that hand right now."

"Ah. This?"

Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and loosened his grip.

With that, Yeop Wi-seon fell to the ground with a thud, landing on his bottom.

Perhaps because his breathing had been obstructed by his neck being grabbed, Yeop Wi-seon coughed violently and tried to say something to Wi So-yeon.

“Cough, cough... Yo-Young... Cough... This runt...”

-Smack!

Mok Gyeong-un lightly struck the back of Yeop Wi-seon’s neck.

Perhaps due to the shock to his brain, Yeop Wi-seon toppled forward in that state and collapsed.

“What are you doing?!”

“Stop.”

As Gi Ok-ryeon tried to step forward, unable to contain her anger at the sight of her companions being treated in such a way, Wi So-yeon restrained her.

Then she spoke to Mok Gyeong-un.

“You’ll have to explain properly what exactly happened here. Otherwise, even if it’s you, I won’t be able to forgive you.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un scratched his head as if he were in a difficult position.

“This is quite troublesome. I simply came to see the Young Lady, but these two gentlemen insisted that they couldn’t let me meet you.”

“They stopped you?”

“Yes.”

“Why did they do that?”

“That’s what I’d like to ask. Even though it was their master who summoned me.”

“...”

Wi So-yeon’s eyes sharpened at the feeling that he was somehow pinching her.

While he had always been brazen in front of her, there was something strangely different from before.

It wasn’t simply being bold in front of a powerful figure, but truly stemming from self-confidence.

This made her question.

Undoubtedly, this man seemed to have made further progress in the meantime.

‘What is it?’

Wi So-yeon couldn’t hide her puzzlement.

Even when she saw him in the Corpse Blood Valley report, she had been greatly surprised by his significantly improved martial arts compared to before.

And now, his martial prowess had advanced again?

While she was finding his rapid progress strange, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

“If you truly find it hard to believe, why don’t you wake them up and ask them?”

“...”

Seeing him go this far, it seemed clear that they had indeed tried to stop Mok Gyeong-un.

But the reason seemed to be that.

Wi So-yeon pointed at Woo Ho-rang, who was lying on the ground, with a nod of her head and said.

“Why is Woo Ho-rang in such a state?”

“This person? He fought with me.”

“What?”

At those words, Wi So-yeon furrowed her brows.

Fight, what did he mean?

“That can’t be. Woo Ho-rang received my order to bring you here. He wouldn’t fight you without my command.”

Moreover, Woo Ho-rang knew the importance of Mok Gyeong-un.

He would know better than anyone that the dynamics of this successor competition would change if they could obtain him, so why would he go to bring Mok Gyeong-un and end up fighting him?

It didn’t make sense.

Then, could it be,

“...Did you challenge Woo Ho-rang to a duel first?”

“There’s no way that would happen? This person cited two reasons and requested a sparring match with me.”

“Two reasons?”

“Yes.”

“What are they?”

“The first reason is difficult for me to disclose due to an agreement with him, and the second reason was that he had to take revenge because that junior brother of his was put in a difficult position because of me.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Gi Ok-ryeon shouted with a flushed face.

“Revenge? What nonsense! Why would Senior Brother Woo disobey the Young Lady’s orders and do such a thing to you...”

“Ok-ryeon. That’s enough.”

“Young Lady. But this fellow is now slandering Senior Brother Woo with lies...”

Before she could finish her sentence, Mok Gyeong-un interjected.

“If you truly can’t believe it, you can wake him up and ask him as well, can’t you?”

“What?”

“You said you couldn’t believe that this person initiated the fight, right?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Gi Ok-ryeon shouted defiantly.

“Do you know why I can’t believe your words? It doesn’t make sense for Senior Brother Woo, one of the Five Tigers, to lose to the likes of you...”

“Ok-ryeon!”

Wi So-yeon finally raised her voice.

Sensing that her mood had turned unpleasant, Gi Ok-ryeon trembled with a flushed face and soon closed her mouth.

“I apologize.”

“Calm down and step back. I know your heart well.”

Being the only one who knew that Gi Ok-ryeon had feelings for Woo Ho-rang, she patted her shoulder as if to comfort her and told her to step back.

Watching them, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head from side to side.

Seeing this, Wi So-yeon spoke in a cold voice.

“What is that attitude right now?”

“Attitude?”

“Your current attitude seems to be mocking me.”

“Hmm. Rather than that, it has made me more confident.”

“Confident?”

“Yes.”

“What have you become confident about?”

In response to Wi So-yeon’s question, Mok Gyeong-un smirked and said.

“I just thought you had no luck with subordinates, but it seems you also pamper your subordinates quite a bit, Young Lady.”

“How dare you!”

Gi Ok-ryeon, who thought he had insulted the Young Lady, raised her voice again.

At that moment,

-Swish!

‘!?’

Mok Gyeong-un’s figure dispersed like mist and disappeared.

At the same time, Wi So-yeon turned her body with a surprised expression and reached out her hand, but,

-Thud!

“Ugh!”

Before her hand could even touch, a dull sound rang out, and Gi Ok-ryeon’s eyes rolled back as her body toppled forward.

Behind the collapsing Gi Ok-ryeon, Mok Gyeong-un stood with his hand raised.

Clicking his tongue, Mok Gyeong-un spoke as if disappointed.

“Why do they all ignore what their master says, one after another?”

“You...”

“This is rather fortunate. I wanted to have a private conversation with you.”

Smiling brightly, Mok Gyeong-un looked at Wi So-yeon, who spoke with surprised eyes.

“...How do you know the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?”

The high-speed movement technique Mok Gyeong-un had just displayed.

If her eyes weren’t mistaken, it was the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, a unique movement technique of First Senior Brother Na Yul-ryang.

'This is?'

For a moment, Wi So-yeon couldn't hide her surprise.

The high-speed movement technique Mok Gyeong-un had just displayed.

If her eyes weren't mistaken, it was the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, a unique movement technique of First Senior Brother Na Yul-ryang.

[Master, why is First Senior Brother's movement technique different from ours?]

[Hohoho. Are you referring to the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?]

[Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?]

[Yes. The Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, the unique movement technique of the Na family that your First Senior Brother has mastered, was once considered one of the three greatest movement techniques in the Central Plains.]

[The best movement technique, you say?]

[Indeed. Along with the Cloud Ladder Stride of the Wudang Sect, known for its profound mysteriousness, and the Wind and Cloud Steps of the Peerless Fortress, which has disappeared as a remnant of the old martial world but was regarded as the best in terms of swiftness and versatility, it gained fame as one of the three greatest movement techniques.]

[Ah! To think he has mastered such an amazing technique...]

[But that's a thing of the past now. If you complete the Sun and Moon Steps that I have imparted to you, you will be able to dominate the world with a single step.]

[Dominate... the world!]

Suddenly, the words her master had spoken to her more than a decade ago came to mind.

Even after ten years, Wi So-yeon still hadn't fully grasped the profound principles of the Sun and Moon Steps.

No, she wasn't even sure if it was truly a stepping technique that could dominate the world, as her master had said.

Because no matter how much she practiced, she couldn't surpass First Senior Brother's Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps.

The same was true for Second Senior Brother Jang Neung-ak.

Anyway, that wasn't the important thing right now.

"How do you know the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?"

"Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?"

"Yes. Do you think I wouldn't recognize First Senior Brother's Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps?"

"Ah..."

Mok Gyeong-un let out a small gasp.

They certainly seemed to be senior and junior disciples.

He had closely observed Na Yul-ryang's movement technique during their confrontation, finding it to be quite efficient, and had learned the stepping method.

But to think she could recognize it at a glance.

"You have keen eyes."

-Pat!

As soon as those words ended, the tip of Wi So-yeon's index and middle fingers, forming a sword finger, touched Mok Gyeong-un's neck.

The sharp aura flowing from it was like a sword.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes twinkled with interest.

It was because there was not a single wasted movement in her actions.

"Your hands are fast."

"You... Just what are you?"

"Pardon?"

"Could it be that First Senior Brother planted you?"

"First Senior Brother? Ah. Are you referring to Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang?"

“Don’t play dumb. First Senior Brother doesn’t even reveal the secrets of his stepping technique or breathing method to Master. Do you think such a First Senior Brother would carelessly teach his unique movement technique to others?”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

“You’re laughing now?”

“Ah. I apologize. It seems I’ve caused a misunderstanding.”

“Misunderstanding?”

“Yes.”

“What misunderstanding are you talking about?”

“It’s true that I learned this movement technique from Young Master Na Yul-ryang, but it’s not what you think.”

“Not what I think?”

“Yes. Rather, should I say I just learned it?”

“Just learned it? What nonsense are you spouting?”

One of Wi So-yeon’s eyebrows arched upwards.

She thought Mok Gyeong-un was toying with her.

No, from the moment he had reduced her subordinates to this state right before her eyes, he had already crossed the line of no return.

-Woosh!

A strong murderous aura emanated from Wi So-yeon.

It was as if she would pierce or slash Mok Gyeong-un's neck at any moment.

However, despite having such immense anger and killing intent, she was restraining herself.

The reason was that if Na Yul-ryang was behind Mok Gyeong-un, the moment she attacked him, she would be making enemies of not only First Senior Brother but also Shadow Clan Master and Poison King.

Wi So-yeon spoke, maintaining as much composure as possible.

"Speak clearly. What is your relationship with First Senior Brother?"

"There's no particular relationship."

"You expect me to believe those words..."

"Come to think of it, I should say we have a rather unpleasant relationship now."

"An unpleasant relationship?"

"Yes. Wouldn't it be better to talk about you and me rather than that?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Wi So-yeon snorted.

“Having First Senior Brother, Poison King, and Shadow Clan Master backing you up, I guess you’ve lost sight of everything? Seeing as you don’t even bother answering my questions.”

At her sharp words, Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders and said.

“I’ve given you proper answers. If there’s anything else you’d like to ask...”

-Swish!

At that moment, Wi So-yeon’s left hand moved.

She moved her hand with lightning speed, attempting to strike Mok Gyeong-un’s chest acupoints.

However,

-Pak!

‘!?’

Wi So-yeon furrowed her brows.

It was because her wrist, which was trying to strike the acupoints, was suddenly caught by Mok Gyeong-un.

This caused a hint of wariness to appear in her eyes.

‘He caught my wrist?’

She had already been convinced that Mok Gyeong-un's martial arts had advanced compared to before.

Therefore, without holding back, she had properly utilized her acupoint striking technique.

Yet, he had intercepted her wrist.

That meant Mok Gyeong-un's martial arts had become much stronger than she had anticipated.

"You... Just how much stronger have you become?"

Wi So-yeon asked bluntly without beating around the bush.

In response to her question, Mok Gyeong-un answered nonchalantly.

"Who knows? It seems my skills are not yet satisfactory."

"What?"

Was he toying with her now?

His martial arts had improved to the point where he could easily catch her wrist when she was determined to strike his acupoints, yet he claimed it wasn't satisfactory?

Of course, this was true.

Mok Gyeong-un was not at all satisfied with his current martial arts.

However, from Wi So-yeon's perspective, there was no way she could believe Mok Gyeong-un's true intentions.

“...Just who are you really?”

A member of the orthodox Yeon Mok Sword Manor.

A hostage of the orthodox faction captured by the Heaven and Earth Society.

The top graduate of the Corpse Blood Valley.

A disciple of Shadow Clan Master.

A disciple of Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

In less than half a month, his martial arts had rapidly improved, and he had even mastered First Senior Brother Na Yul-ryang's unique movement technique.

Each and every step was so difficult to understand that it was hard to make connections.

Wi So-yeon glared at Mok Gyeong-un and said.

“Could it be that you're First Senior Brother's disciple?”

“I told you I'm not.”

“If you're not, then provide clear evidence that you're really not...”

At that moment, before Wi So-yeon could finish her sentence, Mok Gyeong-un pointed to his waist.

There was a small blood-stained leather pouch on Mok Gyeong-un's waist.

“What is this supposed to mean?”

“Should I say there’s something like a trophy inside?”

“Trophy?”

What nonsense was this fellow spouting now?

As she was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un put his hand into the pouch and pulled something out.

Seeing it, Wi So-yeon’s eyes widened.

“You?”

What Mok Gyeong-un held in his hand was none other than an eyeball.

However, this eyeball was somewhat different from that of an ordinary person, as the pupil had a silvery hue.

‘!!!!!’

Upon seeing this, Wi So-yeon’s expression soon froze.

For a moment, she found it hard to believe.

If her thinking was correct, the owner of this eyeball was none other than,

“First Senior Brother?”

“Wow. You recognized it at a glance, just like the movement technique.”

‘This... How...’

For a moment, Wi So-yeon was utterly confused.

She had seen the pupil of First Senior Brother’s right eye taking on a silvery hue only once.

It was during his confrontation with Thunderbolt Fist King Won Byeong-hak.

She had attended the confrontation to witness the martial arts of the Five Kings, the top experts and highest-ranking members of the Heaven and Earth Society, as opportunities to observe their skills were rare.

At that time, Wi So-yeon had seen the change in one of First Senior Brother’s eyes.

‘Impossible.’

But what was going on here?

How did Mok Gyeong-un have this in his possession?

“You... How did you?”

“How do I have this, you ask? As I mentioned, it’s like a trophy.”

A trophy?

Could it be that he had fought First Senior Brother?

As she was perplexed, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and said.

“I think this is enough to explain my relationship with the Young Master. Now, shouldn’t we talk about you and me?”

“You and me?”

“Yes. Didn’t I tell you earlier? I wanted to have a private conversation with you. But now, how about you remove this hand?”

Mok Gyeong-un gestured with his eyes towards Wi So-yeon’s sword finger.

However, with her wariness at its peak, there was no way she would easily withdraw her sword finger.

“...I can’t believe it.”

“Ah. First, let’s remove this...”

“First Senior Brother has crossed the threshold and reached the Transformation Realm. He’s a peerless master. How can you have First Senior Brother’s eye?”

Wi So-yeon’s voice grew louder.

All her attention was now focused solely on this matter.

Although she had been praised by her master for possessing such innate talent and martial potential, no matter how much her martial arts progressed, she couldn’t imagine a scenario where she could defeat First Senior Brother.

Yet, how could this person, who was merely at the Peak Realm just half a month ago, possibly bring down First Senior Brother?

"It's impossible. Even if your martial arts have advanced, First Senior Brother is..."

"Yes. It seems it would still be difficult to handle him alone."

"What?"

"If Master hadn't helped, it would have been challenging to subdue him smoothly."

"Master, you say..."

"Poison King Master assisted me halfway through. As a result, my original intention to stay quiet was slightly disrupted."

"What are you talking about..."

"It's exactly as you heard. As you can see, it seems I'll be at odds with the Young Master because of this incident. Thanks to that, it has become quite troublesome. I'm not ready to face the Young Master yet, and I've heard that his supporting forces are the most solid among the three successors."

-Swish!

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un put the eyeball back into the pouch.

Then, he casually grasped Wi So-yeon's sword finger.

-Pak!

‘!?’

Wi So-yeon’s pupils trembled.

Although it wasn’t a strong energy concentrated with internal force, he remained unfazed even while holding her hand that had been sharpened with a keen aura.

Not stopping there, Mok Gyeong-un tried to remove her sword finger from his neck.

With her wariness reaching its peak, Wi So-yeon drew upon her internal energy.

‘Good. If he truly has the skills to compete with First Senior Brother, I’ll see for myself how much his internal energy has increased.’

-Woosh!

For the first time in several years, Wi So-yeon raised her internal energy to its extreme.

Due to her innate physique, she was unrivaled in terms of internal energy, surpassing even Second Senior Brother Jang Neung-ak. She was even praised for being close to the Transformation Realm.

‘Ho.’

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes twinkled with interest.

With his spiritual eye open, he had estimated her energy to some extent.

But it was exceeding his expectations.

-Crack!

As the confrontation of internal energy unfolded in an instant, cracks appeared on the ground of the courtyard where they stood.

The dirt and sand on the ground even trembled and scattered in all directions.

-Rumble!

The energy of the two was so strong that the cracks on the ground widened further.

Wi So-yeon, who was drawing upon more energy, couldn't help but be inwardly surprised.

Although she hadn't crossed the threshold yet, thanks to her unique body structure called the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, her internal energy was close to the Transformation Realm.

However, Mok Gyeong-un didn't yield to her internal energy in the slightest.

-Urk!

Soon, Wi So-yeon felt blood rising from her stomach to her throat.

Thanks to her master, she could handle the energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, but if she exceeded the limit of internal energy she could endure, her entire body's meridians would run wild.

Wi So-yeon looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

Unlike herself, who was gradually struggling, Mok Gyeong-un showed no change in expression and remained at ease.

As a result, she had no choice but to admit it.

‘Going further is too much.’

If she continued the confrontation, it would be to her disadvantage.

Looking at Mok Gyeong-un now, he wasn’t using his full strength but was drawing upon his energy to match her internal energy.

‘It was true, after all.’

There was no doubt that this child had crossed the threshold.

Realizing this, she felt a sense of absurdity and even despair.

Eventually, Wi So-yeon began to lower her internal energy little by little.

She was retreating.

-Swish!

As they both lowered their internal energy, the dirt and sand that had been scattering in all directions settled down.

Wi So-yeon spoke with genuine astonishment.

“...You’re truly a monster.”

“I don’t know whether to take that as a compliment or not.”

"I've never seen someone whose martial arts advance as rapidly as yours. Even First Senior Brother, who was praised as a genius, wouldn't have been like this."

"Who knows? That's something we can't be sure of."

Wi So-yeon clicked her tongue inwardly, thinking Mok Gyeong-un was being modest.

However, Mok Gyeong-un truly had no particular feelings about it.

To such Mok Gyeong-un, Wi So-yeon said.

"...I think I know why you fought with First Senior Brother."

"You think you know?"

"Yes. Even if First Senior Brother desires talented individuals, he doesn't want those he can't handle."

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

As expected of senior and junior disciples, she knew Young Master Na Yul-ryang quite well.

"Since you know that well, I suppose you also know why I came here."

"Since you said you're at odds with First Senior Brother, you probably need the shelter of other successors, right?"

"Well, you could say it's a similar reason."

At Mok Gyeong-un's answer, Wi So-yeon spoke as if she couldn't understand.

"But then, why did you go this far? If you need me, in the end..."

"No, that's not it."

Before Wi So-yeon could finish her sentence, Mok Gyeong-un denied it.

She furrowed her brows and said.

"Not it, you say? Then why did you do all this..."

"To show you."

"What?"

"To show you how incompetent you are as a successor."

At Mok Gyeong-un's cutting words, Wi So-yeon's expression turned fierce. So, after reducing her subordinates to such a state and seeking to have a private conversation, was he aiming to say such things?

As she was feeling angry and dumbfounded, Mok Gyeong-un spoke with a smile.

"So, about that body of yours, give it to me."

'!?'

In an instant, her expression hardened.

Chapter 164 – Proposition (4)

“To show you how incompetent you are as a successor.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s insulting words, Wi So-yeon’s expression turned fierce.

To become the Society Leader’s successor, she had shouldered many burdens.

How dare he judge her so presumptuously, as if he knew the weight of the path she bore?

-Clench!

“You...”

Just as Wi So-yeon was about to unleash her anger while biting her lip,

Mok Gyeong-un spoke with a bright smile.

“So, about that body of yours, give it to me.”

‘!?’

In an instant, Wi So-yeon’s expression hardened.

For a moment, she doubted her own ears.

What did this person just say to her?

‘Give her body to him?’

-Flush!

Repeating the words she heard in her mind, her face turned as red as a persimmon in an instant.

It was a humiliating feeling she had never experienced before in her life.

To Wi So-yeon’s ears, this absurd request made by Mok Gyeong-un sounded like he was blatantly toying with her.

Since she had decided to walk the path of a successor, she had given up on a life as a woman.

Yet, was this bastard mocking her?

-Whoosh!

Wi So-yeon couldn’t endure it any longer.

In an instant, a sharp murderous intent rose from her sword fingers, attempting to slash Mok Gyeong-un’s neck.

‘I’ll kill you.’

However,

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un lightly evaded her murderous intent with a half-step movement and grasped her wrist.

But unlike before, since she had truly made up her mind to kill Mok Gyeong-un, there was no way she would stop here.

-Swish!

The moment her wrist was grasped, Wi So-yeon aimed a kick at Mok Gyeong-un's head.

However, it wasn't an ordinary kick.

The kick was also imbued with a sharp murderous intent.

'It's possible with the feet too?'

Faced with the sharp murderous intent unleashed by her kick and the exceptionally sharp strike, Mok Gyeong-un slightly tilted his head back.

Wi So-yeon's kick narrowly missed.

She didn't stop there and unleashed a series of attacks.

'Heavenly Sword Technique. Third Stance, Heavenly Research Sword!'

-Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh!

From Wi So-yeon's hands, a light like starlight shone, and simultaneously, eight sword fingers attempted to pierce Mok Gyeong-un's vital acupoints.

The sword intent that rises, then rises further, and surpasses that, is called the Peerless Sword Intent.

Six Heavens.

The sword intent of the Heavenly Sword Technique, the unique technique of the Society Leader, one of the six absolutes known as the pinnacle of the Central Plains martial world, was a truly flawless and peerless sword intent.

However,

-Swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh swoosh!

Amidst her sword technique, Mok Gyeong-un's sword fingers cunningly penetrated.

It was a trajectory of sword fingers that even she hadn't anticipated.

This caused a glint of interest to appear in Wi So-yeon's eyes.

'How?'

As if reading her mind, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

"You put in more force than the Young Master's sword intent."

'Ah!'

Right. Come to think of it, this fellow said he had also confronted First Senior Brother.

But he was truly absurd.

He must have only fought First Senior Brother once, yet she never expected him to respond in such a way to the Heavenly Sword Technique, known for its flawless and near-perfect sword intent.

-Clang clang clang clang clang!

As her murderous intent and Mok Gyeong-un's murderous intent collided, cracks formed in the air, and a sharp sound like metal clashing spread out.

-Swish!

As Mok Gyeong-un's single sword penetrated the gap in her technique, she hastily switched her sword intent.

'Heavenly Sword Technique. Fifth Stance, Chaotic World of the Celestial Origin!'

Like a falling water droplet creating a hole in a rock over a long period, the sword path was directed towards a single point.

The Fifth Stance possessed a power comparable to the secret techniques of the Heavenly Sword Technique.

However,

-Clang clang clang clang!

Mok Gyeong-un created a dense net with his sword fingers and instead pressured her sword intent.

As a result, Wi So-yeon's expression grew increasingly gloomy.

Who the hell was this person?

How was he penetrating the Heavenly Sword Technique in such a way?

Even if he hadn't fought First Senior Brother for three days and nights, he seemed too familiar with the sword intent.

It was as if he had some knowledge of the Heavenly Sword Technique.

'Is this what a true genius is?'

Just half a month ago, she had considered him to be nothing more than a novice, but now he had become an immeasurable, colossal mountain.

He was truly a monstrous being.

How wonderful would it have been if such a person had followed her with sincere loyalty?

However, this person was undoubtedly a vessel that no one could control.

He was a brazen man who would come to her after his martial arts had advanced, cause a commotion, and even bring shame upon her.

She could understand why First Senior Brother had fought with this person.

This person...

-Swish!

It was at that moment.

In an instant, his figure dispersed like smoke, and Mok Gyeong-un had already penetrated the sword trajectory created by Wi So-yeon, arriving right in front of her.

‘Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps!’

The danger of this movement technique lay in its high-speed movement at close range.

The stepping method was so marvelous that it was difficult to catch its movements with the naked eye even within a mere ten steps.

‘How the hell did he learn this?’

No matter how much she thought about it, she couldn’t understand.

But that wasn’t the important thing right now.

Wi So-yeon hurriedly raised her murderous intent with her left hand, trying to block Mok Gyeong-un.

However,

-Pak!

Mok Gyeong-un’s movement was much faster than hers.

In an instant, he lightly grasped her left wrist, pressed the acupoint on her shoulder, and pushed her back.

“Ugh!”

-Swoosh!

Wi So-yeon's body was pushed back about six steps in an instant.

"Haa..."

A sigh escaped Wi So-yeon's lips.

'Strong.'

Undeniably, Mok Gyeong-un was currently a step above her.

The difference between having crossed the threshold and not having crossed it was evident.

However,

'He grasped the acupoint on my shoulder, not my neck.'

It seemed as if he was trying to subdue her without injury.

Because of this, she felt even more unpleasant.

'Is he going easy on me?'

In the first place, it didn't feel like he was treating her as a martial artist.

[Give that body to me.]

-Clench!

Wi So-yeon bit her lip tightly.

Was it because he saw her as a woman after all?

Because of that, along with the shame as a martial artist, a strange feeling blossomed within her emotions.

‘This should be enough, right?’

Of course, contrary to her resentful state of mind, Mok Gyeong-un was merely following Cheong-ryeong’s request and adjusting his strength appropriately to subdue Wi So-yeon without any flaws.

If it weren’t for her unique physique, where her true energy overflowed to an extraordinary degree compared to her martial prowess, he would have already subdued her.

-Hohoho. Well done, Mortal.

Cheong-ryeong spoke as if satisfied.

Until now, she had postponed her plans for the future, not knowing when Mok Gyeong-un would become stronger, but she had been eyeing Wi So-yeon’s body, which resembled her own.

Possession was no different from seizing a body.

However, since Wi So-yeon’s appearance was so similar to her own, obtaining her body felt like being reborn, making her excited.

-Strike her brain and make her lose consciousness. From then on, I will take care of the rest.

-As you wish.

With that, Mok Gyeong-un pushed Wi So-yeon further, eventually making her fall to the ground.

-Thud!

'Ah.'

Unable to maintain her posture, Wi So-yeon fell to the ground and was seized by a sense of shame at the sight of Mok Gyeong-un looking down at her from above while pressing her down.

Was this bastard really after her body?

As a disciple of the Heaven and Earth Society Leader, no one had been able to directly express their feelings towards her as a member of the opposite sex.

Yet, to think he would blatantly toy with her like this.

"Let go!"

"I can't do that."

"Do you think you can handle the consequences of doing something like this?"

"Consequences? If I thought I couldn't handle it, I wouldn't have done it in the first place. And once you give me your body, you'll always be with me anyway. What's the big deal?"

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly.

It was truly strange.

When she first saw him, she did consider him to be a man of exceptional beauty and handsomeness.

However, since she intended to walk the path of a leader, that was the end of it.

But strangely, once she became aware that Mok Gyeong-un was trying to have her, Wi So-yeon's face flushed red in an instant.

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

Her heart was beating wildly like crazy.

Why was this happening?

It was difficult to control her frantically beating heart.

[You'll always be with me anyway. What's the big deal?]

Mok Gyeong-un's words kept echoing in her mind, leaving her in a state of confusion.

Did this bastard desire her as a woman to the extent that he was willing to bear all the repercussions?

'...'

Wi So-yeon gazed into Mok Gyeong-un's eyes.

His unwavering gaze, which seemed upright, was directly fixed on her face.

Excluding her master and senior brothers, he was the first man to look her straight in the eye like this.

'...'

As he did so, Mok Gyeong-un brought his hand to her face.

To be precise, he was trying to strike her forehead with his palm, causing damage to her brain.

At that moment, she spoke.

“Wait.”

Of course, there was no way Mok Gyeong-un would stop at those words.

But Wi So-yeon spoke in a slightly trembling voice.

“You... Do you truly desire me as a woman?”

‘!?’

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un furrowed his brows.

Desire her as a woman?

It seemed this woman had misunderstood something.

Although he had no interest in romantic relationships or emotional attachments between men and women, Mok Gyeong-un could immediately discern how she had interpreted his words.

‘Ah. Was there room for misunderstanding?’

Since she was unaware of his true intentions, she naturally had no choice but to misinterpret his words about wanting her body.

However, there was no need for further explanation now.

So, ignoring it, he tried to bring his palm to her forehead, but,

-Woosh!

At that moment, Wi So-yeon's energy surged intensely.

Her internal energy, which had soared tremendously in an instant, surpassing the level of simply drawing upon it, exceeded even Mok Gyeong-un, who had reached the early stage of the Transformation Realm.

'What is this?'

But that wasn't the end.

-Rumble!

Along with it, an immense cold energy seeped out from Wi So-yeon.

The cold energy was so strong that frost formed on their surroundings in an instant, and white breath flowed from Mok Gyeong-un's mouth.

-Sizzle!

Wi So-yeon's hair gradually turned white.

Her appearance was truly mystical.

At her transformation, Cheong-ryeong exclaimed in disbelief.

-Ha! Mortal, this wench possesses the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

-Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians?

-It's a rare physique that appears once every few hundred years. Due to the incessant rise of yin true energy from all meridians, the blood in her body is blocked, and she is destined to die young before even reaching adulthood.

-...But she seems fine.

-It seems she has learned how to suppress the energy within her body.

Otherwise, there was no way she could have survived without the yin energy running rampant like this.

It was Cheong-ryeong's first time seeing the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

The Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, known as a cursed physique with a predestined short lifespan, could yield the tremendous advantage of inexhaustible true energy regardless of cultivation if overcome, but it was no easy feat.

Until now, she had never heard of anyone overcoming the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

'This wench...'

Could it be that she had overcome the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians?

-Crack! Crack!

But blue veins had appeared around Wi So-yeon's eyes.

'No, that's not it.'

As expected, she hadn't overcome the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

Her prediction was accurate.

Currently, Wi So-yeon had released the True Harmony Forbidden Gate Secrets she had learned from her master and opened up the True Divine Yin Energy of the Absolute Meridians throughout her body, which she had been suppressing with great difficulty.

[Half a moment at most. You must not exceed that.]

It was the time her master had warned her about.

If she maintained this state for more than half a moment, her entire body's meridians would freeze, and she would die.

However, during that brief moment, she could unleash the extreme yin energy that even a master of the Transformation Realm couldn't easily deal with.

The only ones aware of this fact were her master, the Society Leader, and herself.

'I intended to keep it hidden as a trump card against First Senior Brother, but...'

To think she would end up using it against this man.

If he managed to overcome even this cursed power that could take her life, she would accept it as fate.

Pouring out her True Divine Yin Energy, she spoke.

“You want to have me? Then try to break this cursed power as well.”

-Whoosh! Rumble!

The immense True Divine Yin Energy caused the clothes of Wi So-yeon and Mok Gyeong-un to freeze entirely.

The surroundings within a radius of a dozen zhang were filled with cold energy, reminiscent of the frigid cold of the Northern Sea.

Wi So-yeon drew upon even more true energy, trying to fling Mok Gyeong-un away from on top of her, where he was pressing down on her shoulders.

-Whoosh!

It was at that very moment.

-Sizzle!

Instantly, a dark red energy surged from Mok Gyeong-un's entire body.

As a result, the dark red energy and the cold energy she was emitting collided, and the surroundings were engulfed in steam.

‘This is?’

Wi So-yeon could instinctively recognize what this energy was.

It was poison energy.

‘...Impossible.’

Emitting poison energy from one’s entire body was the realm of a Poison Man.

What the hell was going on?

Although Mok Gyeong-un had been accepted as Poison King’s disciple, it had only been two hours ago.

Yet, in that short time, he had mastered Poison King’s unique technique, the Perishing Poison Scripture, and reached the realm of a Poison Man, which could be considered the pinnacle of that technique?

How could such an absurd thing happen?

It was utterly unbelievable.

But then, Mok Gyeong-un’s voice reached her ears.

“You’re curious about how I dealt with the Eldest Young Master, right

“What?”

Before his words could even end, Mok Gyeong-un embraced the lying Wi So-yeon.

“Now, sleep...”

-Sizzle!

At that moment, as the cold energy and poison energy collided, even stronger steam billowed out.

However, this led to a perplexing situation for Wi So-yeon.

The vicious poison energy also carried heat, causing the frozen clothes of the two, who had been emitting True Divine Yin Energy and cold energy, to crumble.

-Crumble!

“You... You!”

As their clothes shattered and bare skin touched, Wi So-yeon’s cheeks turned bright red as if they would burst.

In that instant, Mok Gyeong-un detected a momentary fluctuation in her energy.

And he could identify the source of her rampaging Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians’ energy.

‘Found it.’

It was the Central Floodgate acupoint of the Conception Vessel meridian.

Mok Gyeong-un pushed the perplexed Wi So-yeon away and placed his palm on the Central Floodgate acupoint below her chest.

Overwhelmed with embarrassment, Wi So-yeon hurriedly tried to push Mok Gyeong-un away.

“Get your hands off me right now!”

However,

-Whoosh!

“Aah.”

At that moment, her slender waist arched backward.

‘!!!!’

Wi So-yeon’s eyes trembled as her head tilted back.

That was because the rampaging energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians was being absorbed through Mok Gyeong-un’s palm.

Chapter 165 – Variables (1)

On the main road not far from Baek Clan, about twenty martial artists from Baek Clan were cleaning up the surroundings.

The one commanding them was Baek So-gang, the External Chief Administrator of Baek Clan and the second son of Poison King Baek Sa-ha.

“Oh my.”

Baek So-gang clicked his tongue as he looked at the aftermath around him.

It was a mess, as if a battle had taken place.

Although his fame was not as high as his father Baek Sa-ha or his elder brother due to being overshadowed by them, he was also an expert who had reached the early stage of the Transcendent Realm.

Therefore, he could roughly guess what kind of fight had occurred just by looking at the traces of the aftermath.

‘I’ve heard from my father, but...’

The sword marks filling the ground were truly shocking.

It was worthy of being called a confrontation between peerless masters who had crossed the threshold.

In fact, Baek So-gang couldn’t help but worry after hearing about this matter.

Although his father, Poison King Baek Sa-ha, had broken through and reached the Transformation Realm, his opponent was the most likely candidate to succeed the Heaven and Earth Society.

Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang had numerous supporting forces under him.

If they were to become enemies with them, it would put Baek Clan in a precarious situation.

However,

[What? He, he crossed the threshold?]

[Shh. Keep it down. This fact should be kept hidden from the outside for a while.]

[How can this be...]

Baek So-gang, the second son, doubted his own ears.

Mok Gyeong-un, the newly accepted disciple of his father, had gained enlightenment and broken through the threshold while confronting Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

It was something unbelievable even after hearing it.

However, looking at the aftermath of the battle left here, it was definitely not the trace of being one-sidedly defeated.

‘...Is this really possible?’

The speed at which he was growing stronger was beyond imagination.

Even those who were called Grand Leaders or legends of the martial world probably couldn’t have progressed this quickly.

Was he truly a once-in-a-millennium genius, as his father had said?

Considering the current situation, it was not an exaggerated statement at all.

However, there was a concern.

‘Is my father’s choice the right one?’

Although he possessed astonishing talent, it seemed as if his father had staked their fate on one person without any consultation with the family members or relatives.

The orders of the family head were absolute, but this time, he couldn’t help but feel uneasy.

“Phew.”

Anyway, they had to clean up this place quickly.

Fortunately, it was an inner city area managed by Baek Clan, so if they hurried, they could erase most of the traces within half an hour.

“Uh... Chief Administrator.”

At that moment, a martial artist from Baek Clan approached and spoke to him.

“What is it?”

“About... What should we do with Eldest Young Master?”

They had brought bandages and medicine to provide temporary treatment and had laid him on a stretcher.

However, the martial artists of Baek Clan were hesitant to move the severely injured Young Master to his residence, fearing the consequences.

Understanding their sentiments, Baek So-gang spoke.

“I will accompany you, so you all carry the stretcher and follow...”

-Whoosh!

In an instant, the surroundings were shrouded in dark shadows.

Baek So-gang stood with his mouth open, and the martial artists of Baek Clan, who were cleaning up the surroundings, also froze in place, maintaining the posture they were in.

It was a strange phenomenon, as if everyone's time had stopped.

However, there was someone who was the only one moving in this place.

-Thump thump!

A man in a gray martial arts uniform with the yin-yang symbol walked slowly with his hands behind his back.

He was Cho Tae-cheong, the chief disciple of In Seo-ok, the former Pavilion Master of the Primal Killing Pavilion.

Cho Tae-cheong's eyes were peculiar as he walked around casually, looking at the surroundings while everyone else was frozen.

"Hmm. This is definitely the right place."

Cho Tae-cheong stroked his chin and let out a groan.

He had sensed an immense spiritual power here, even if only for a moment.

It was no exaggeration to say that it was a wandering spirit he had never seen in recent times.

'At least on the level of Blue Spirit.'

Blue Spirit.

A wandering spirit that had existed for over a hundred years.

A wandering spirit of this level was no different from a strange being like the ghost sorcerer, so if left alone, the surroundings would turn into a mess or suffer great negative influence.

Then, the corners of Cho Tae-cheong's mouth twitched, and he opened his mouth with a completely different expression from before.

"No. It's beyond that."

A slightly more ominous and hoarse voice flowed from his mouth.

Then, the muscles on Cho Tae-cheong's face twitched again and returned to normal.

"Beyond that?"

Cho Tae-cheong furrowed his brows.

Then, he formed a hand seal with his fingers and closed his eyes.

It was to examine the remnants of the lingering spiritual power.

However,

'Crafty bastard.'

There were no traces of spiritual power left in the surroundings.

Like this, tracking was impossible.

Cho Tae-cheong, who was clicking his tongue, seemed to have lost interest and tried to leave this place.

But as he was about to leave, he suddenly stopped.

Cho Tae-cheong looked down at a being lying on a stretcher.

It was none other than Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

As he looked down at him, the muscles of Cho Tae-cheong's lips twitched again, and his expression changed.

In that state, Cho Tae-cheong bent over and brought his hand to Na Yul-ryang's face.

-Swish!

Touching the bandaged right eye area, Cho Tae-cheong furrowed his brows.

The furrowed brows twisted and contorted slightly.

Then, Cho Tae-cheong muttered in a small voice as if he was displeased.

"You lost what I gave you in this way?"

At the same time,

"Aah."

At that moment, her slender waist arched backward.

Wi So-yeon's eyes trembled.

That was because the rampaging energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians was being absorbed through Mok Gyeong-un's palm.

'What, what is this?'

The Central Floodgate acupoint of the Conception Vessel meridian was no exaggeration to say it was the center of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

It was because the True Divine Yin Energy spreading from there blocked all the meridians and caused Absolute Meridian symptoms.

How did Mok Gyeong-un figure this out?

But that wasn't the important thing.

-Whoosh!

Due to the True Divine Yin Energy being rapidly absorbed, the immense cold energy emitted from her subsided.

'This is...'

Her master had said this.

[The yin energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians is colder than the storms of the Northern Sea, so there is no way to control it by ordinary means.]

[Then do I have to live in such a precarious state for the rest of my life?]

[Yes.]

[Can't Master's profound internal energy do anything about it?]

[If I try to forcibly suppress your energy with my yang and strong true energy, there is a nine out of ten chance that your life will be in even greater danger. Can you bear that?]

[Is there no other way?]

[Another way... There is one more, but it is practically impossible as well.]

[What is it?]

[The Central Floodgate acupoint, which can be considered the center of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, is like an inexhaustible spring for you. That is why the True Divine Yin Energy is unceasing. However, if that energy can be temporarily dried up...]

[Then can it be cured?]

[If all the blocked Absolute Meridians are opened at that time, there is a slight possibility.]

[Can't Master do it?]

In response to her question, the Society Leader shook his head.

[Why?]

[As I said before, if I try to forcibly suppress the True Divine Yin Energy with opposing energy, you may lose your life immediately.]

[Then? Then how can the energy be dried up?]

The True Divine Yin Energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians is an inexhaustible energy.

But by what means is it possible to achieve this?

[Didn't I tell you? This is also impossible.]

[...]

[Even if there is someone who has mastered the Ritual of Binding, known to sever the meridians, and can absorb your True Divine Yin Energy to cut it off even for a moment, there is a possibility, but who can do such a thing? The moment they absorb that immense amount of True Divine Yin Energy from the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, their body will freeze and die.]

That's why her master said there was no way to completely cure the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

But an unbelievable thing was happening.

This man was absorbing her True Divine Yin Energy.

Even her master had said it was absolutely impossible because the cold energy was so severe.

-Whoosh!

Is this man really okay?

As she was wondering, she raised her tilted head and looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

Despite the immense cold energy, which would make one feel as if their body was freezing while absorbing it, Mok Gyeong-un was silently absorbing the energy without saying a word, exhaling white breath.

Seeing him like this, Wi So-yeon suddenly felt strange.

‘This man...’

Why is he going this far?

He must have immediately realized how difficult it was to endure the energy the moment he absorbed her True Divine Yin Energy.

‘Why... are you risking your life?’

Wi So-yeon truly couldn’t understand.

Risking one’s life for others was not an easy thing to do.

Why else would there be a saying about a lifetime?

Dedicating one’s only life to someone was akin to sacrifice.

‘Mok Gyeong-un...’

Do you desire me to the extent of risking your life?

Is that really the case?

The look in Wi So-yeon's eyes as she gazed at Mok Gyeong-un was clearly different from a moment ago.

It had evidently become closer to affection.

Of course, contrary to her change in feelings, Mok Gyeong-un was simply focusing on making this new energy with a different constitution his own.

'As expected.'

The core of Mok Gyeong-un's current energy was demonic energy.

However, its origin stemmed from the energy of the dead, which could be called death energy.

Although its nature was different from the yin energy possessed by death, there was no way the True Divine Yin Energy could compare to it.

-Whoosh!

However, unlike yang energy, the True Divine Yin Energy did not dissipate within the body.

This meant that he could make this new energy called True Divine Yin Energy his own.

If he could fully absorb this energy, it would become twice as much as the energy he had gained upon entering the early stage of the Transformation Realm.

Mok Gyeong-un absorbed her energy even faster using the Ritual of Binding.

And when it reached its peak,

‘Now!’

Wi So-yeon could feel the True Divine Yin Energy rising from the Central Floodgate acupoint temporarily dry up.

She didn’t miss that moment.

As Mok Gyeong-un continued to absorb the energy from the Central Floodgate acupoint, an opportunity arose to challenge it.

“Phew.”

Wi So-yeon circulated the energy in her danjeon using a breathing technique.

And she simultaneously sent all the remaining energy towards her blocked Absolute Meridians.

-Boom boom boom boom boom boom!

Her true energy collided with the blocked meridians.

An immense pain, as if all the blood vessels in her body would burst, came over her.

“Aaaargh!”

A groan escaped Wi So-yeon’s mouth.

She was in so much pain.

However, seeing Mok Gyeong-un in front of her, not showing any sign of suffering, she steeled her resolve.

‘I can do it too.’

-Crack! Crack!

The main acupoints on her body bulged out and made sounds.

The blocked Absolute Meridians had begun to react.

Steam rose from her body, which had been overflowing with cold energy, and beads of sweat flowed down her now naked body.

-Crack!

And in an instant, all the blocked Absolute Meridians,

-Boom boom boom boom!

Were opened.

Along with it, a change occurred in the energy that had dried up due to the Ritual of Binding.

The rampaging energy was being controlled.

‘The energy?’

Mok Gyeong-un, who seemed to have sensed this as well, stopped the Ritual of Binding and ceased absorbing the True Divine Yin Energy.

Then, he began the process of making the absorbed energies his own through the Reverse Meridian Circulation Technique.

As each of them entered an important moment,

‘This is my chance.’

Cheong-ryeong emerged from the wooden puppet and manifested.

She had been waiting for the optimal state to continue possessing the body.

If Wi So-yeon overcame the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians by fully opening the meridians, she would enter a different realm from before.

Before that, she had to take the body now.

-Swoosh!

With that, Cheong-ryeong merged into Wi So-yeon’s body.

But the moment her body overlapped about halfway,

‘!!!!!’

Cheong-ryeong’s expression distorted.

Then, as if struggling, Cheong-ryeong tried to get out of Wi So-yeon’s body.

However, strangely, Wi So-yeon's body seemed to be pulling Cheong-ryeong's spiritual body, as if it was being absorbed.

-Urgh!

As a result, Cheong-ryeong had no choice but to increase her spiritual power for a moment.

-Boom!

Since she had reached the level of Blue Spirit, an immense spiritual power was unleashed.

Thanks to that, Cheong-ryeong was able to avoid being absorbed and escape.

Having narrowly avoided possession, Cheong-ryeong looked at Wi So-yeon with a stiff expression.

'What the hell is this?'

That body... something is strange.

This was a phenomenon different from possession.

It was as if her spiritual body was trying to take root in that body.

Originally, it should have collided with the original owner's soul, but instead, it was trying to be absorbed, which was extremely strange.

Startled by this, Cheong-ryeong had no choice but to leave.

‘This mortal wench, seriously...’

-Startled!

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong looked somewhere.

Then, she bit her lip tightly.

‘Annoying bastard.’

Once again, a vast curse power spread in all directions, detecting her presence.

If he could sense the spiritual power she had raised for a moment even from a distance, he must not be an ordinary diviner.

It seemed he would soon rush to this place.

-Mortal... Ah!

She was about to hurriedly ask to be sealed back into the wooden puppet, but Mok Gyeong-un was preoccupied with absorbing the True Divine Yin Energy.

As a result,

‘I need to escape for now.’

If that guy came to this place, a rather troublesome situation would unfold.

She had to lure him to another location and hide her presence.

-Swoosh!

Then, she flew into the air and headed northeast.

Not long after Cheong-ryeong disappeared, Mok Gyeong-un was able to fully digest the absorbed True Divine Yin Energy and make it his own.

The three types of energy – demonic energy, poison energy, and True Divine Yin Energy – achieved balance within his body.

Thanks to that, his entire body was filled with energy, making him feel refreshed.

‘Not bad.’

With this level of energy, it seemed he could sufficiently compete with Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

Mok Gyeong-un untangled his legs from the cross-legged position and looked at Wi So-yeon, who was lying naked in front of him.

“Haa... Haa...”

Coincidentally, she had just succeeded in opening all her Absolute Meridians and completely controlling the energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

As the meridians opened and the waste was expelled, her body was filled with a healthy glow.

However, she seemed exhausted, her hair, face, and entire body drenched in sweat, and her breathing was still rough.

‘Meridians... I opened the meridians.’

Wi So-yeon’s eyes reddened.

She had been living with the fear that if the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians went out of control to the point where even the Forbidden Gate Secrets couldn’t control it, she could die at any moment.

She couldn’t contain her joy.

There was no longer any risk of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians going out of control, so she had essentially obtained the best physique.

A smile spread across Wi So-yeon’s face.

But then, someone suddenly poked their face in front of her.

“How is your body? Are you alright?”

It was none other than Mok Gyeong-un.

“Eek!”

For a moment, seeing Mok Gyeong-un asking if she was okay while she was naked, Wi So-yeon realized that she herself was also in a naked state.

As a result, her face turned red like a beet in an instant.

Wi So-yeon hurriedly covered her chest with both arms.

‘Huh?’

Seeing her reaction, Mok Gyeong-un raised one eyebrow.

What's this?

Hasn't Cheong-ryeong taken over the body?

Her reaction feels somewhat different from Cheong-ryeong's.

As he was puzzled, Wi So-yeon spoke with an embarrassed face that had turned bright red.

"You... Are you really okay?"

"Pardon?"

"You absorbed the True Divine Yin Energy, are you okay?"

Upon hearing her question, Mok Gyeong-un could instantly realize.

The woman in front of him was Wi So-yeon.

Cheong-ryeong was not possessing her.

-Cheong-ryeong?

With that, Mok Gyeong-un looked around and opened his spiritual sense to search for Cheong-ryeong.

What on earth happened?

But then, Wi So-yeon spoke in a trembling voice.

“What’s wrong? Is something wrong?”

In response to her question, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head and replied.

“I’m fine. You don’t need to worry about me.”

More importantly, something had gone wrong with the plan.

Cheong-ryeong should have been possessing Wi So-yeon’s body, but suddenly, her energy had moved quite far away.

He didn’t know what had happened.

But then, Wi So-yeon asked again.

“Are you really okay?”

“Yes. I said I’m fine.”

Then, Wi So-yeon, still blushing with embarrassment, spoke with relief.

“That’s a relief.”

She had hoped for Mok Gyeong-un, who was no different from her savior, to be safe.

But to think he had survived even after absorbing that immense cold energy, she was genuinely relieved.

Perhaps because of that, her heart was strangely pounding.

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

Why was her heart acting like this?

Chapter 166 – Variables (2)

Originally, Wi So-yeon was from a renowned martial arts family under the Heaven and Earth Society.

Heroic Spear Wi Family.

Born as the daughter of a martial arts family that specialized in spears, she was weak and sickly from birth, always having to lie in bed.

The head of the Wi Family had low innate martial talent, with his martial arts only reaching the perfected Peak Realm, so he thought his daughter Wi So-yeon was simply suffering from an ordinary Meridian Blockage syndrome, causing her to be weak.

So, he told her not to learn martial arts and to live an ordinary life.

However, having inherited the blood of a martial arts family, she wanted to learn the family's martial arts like her other siblings.

It was too difficult to simply lie in bed and watch.

Therefore, despite her illness, she secretly trained in martial arts without her father or family knowing.

But it was not easy for her, born with the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, to willingly learn martial arts.

Eventually, the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians went out of control.

[Aaaaargh!]

Unable to control her rampaging energy, Wi Hyeon, the head of the Wi Family, took Wi So-yeon to the inner city with the token of merit he had received from his grandfather's time.

He believed that only the doctors or executives in the inner city could save her.

But then, a coincidental incident occurred.

[Society Leader, we pay our respects!]

[Ah, ah. No need for formalities.]

The Society Leader, who was receiving treatment in the inner city, had come to visit.

The Society Leader, whom even her father had never seen in person, had come to see her...

The Society Leader stared intently at her face, then stroked her head once and muttered incomprehensible words.

[As expected?]

What was as expected?

It was puzzling even in the midst of pain, but even more surprising words flowed from the Society Leader's mouth.

[Do you want to save this child?]

[Y-Yes, I do.]

[Then hand this child over to me.]

[Pardon?]

[Didn't you hear me? I said hand her over to me.]

Thus, having caught the Society Leader's eye, she was taken in as a disciple on the spot.

The Society Leader, who was interested in the strange Meridian Blockage syndrome called the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, where true energy was endlessly generated, accepted her as a disciple and tried to cure it.

However, even he, one of the Six Heavens, considered the pinnacle of the current martial arts world, was ultimately unable to completely cure the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

In the end, the limit was temporarily blocking the meridian pathways and suppressing the energy that tried to rampage using a breathing technique.

This Forbidden Gate Secrets breathing technique devised by the Society Leader was highly effective.

However, due to the increasing rampage of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians that grew stronger by the day, she had to suffer periodic pain that felt like all the blood vessels in her body would burst and she would die.

[Aaaah!]

The intervals between these bouts of pain grew shorter as the years passed.

At first, it occurred once every few months, then once every two months after two years, and once a month after another year.

Wi So-yeon was gradually realizing.

If these intervals became even shorter, her life would be in danger someday.

‘Is the curse of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians truly incurable?’

Is this how she has to accept her fate?

No, in the first place, it was said that it would be difficult to live past twenty years old.

But she had already surpassed twenty.

This was probably thanks to the Forbidden Gate Secrets created by her master.

As the intervals of the rampages became shorter, Wi So-yeon, who sensed the end approaching quickly, grew colder and even lost her smile.

It would be more accurate to say that she had lost any special motivation for life.

Then, a sudden thought occurred to her.

If she were to die like this, what would she leave behind in this world?

‘...Will it be a meaningless death?’

She would be doing nothing more than prolonging her life and dying.

With this, she made a resolution.

If she only had a short time left to live anyway, she would do everything she could.

That one goal was to become the Society Leader, the pinnacle of the Heaven and Earth Society.

[Cough, cough. You want a chance too?]

[Yes.]

Wi So-yeon went to her bedridden master and made a request.

Whether it worked or not, she had decided to do everything she could, so it was a matter of no loss.

[You can't even control your own body yet, and you want to become the Society Leader?]

[...Yes.]

Was it impossible after all?

However,

[Hahaha! Cough, cough... How interesting. The one who used to have dead eyes as if the world would end at any moment suddenly wants to be the Society Leader... As expected, you resemble... Cough, cough.]

[Pardon?]

[No. It's fine. Do as you please. Anyone with the qualifications can become the Society Leader. Give it a try and challenge for the successor position.]

Thus, the Society Leader made a public announcement.

He said that all three disciples had the qualifications to be successors.

As a result, the competition between the three disciples officially began.

She was determined to stake everything and burn with passion in this competition as her last chance in life.

It was because she believed it was something she could leave behind in the world since her birth.

However,

-Thump! Thump! Thump!

A miracle occurred in the life she had given up on.

Thanks to this man in front of her eyes, the door of life, which she thought had little time left, had opened wide again.

'Why is my heart acting like this?'

As she looked at Mok Gyeong-un, her heart pounded strangely, more than the feeling of embarrassment.

And her face felt so hot that it was burning.

What kind of emotion was this?

It was completely unfamiliar.

After staring at Mok Gyeong-un's face for a long time, she unconsciously brought her hand to his cheek.

-Swish!

Thanks to that, Mok Gyeong-un, who had been looking around, turned his gaze to her.

'Ah?'

What did I just do?

For a moment, the flustered Wi So-yeon couldn't sit still.

Mok Gyeong-un stared intently at her.

When their eyes met, Wi So-yeon swallowed her dry saliva.

'Why... Why is he staring at me like that? It's too...'

Her heart beat even faster, either because she was embarrassed to be naked or because his gaze was overwhelming.

Unlike her, Mok Gyeong-un's thoughts were going in a different direction.

'What should I do?'

It had deviated from the original purpose.

I don't know why Cheong-ryeong's energy has dropped, but it's clear that the possession didn't occur.

Then, even if she returned, it would be difficult to know if it would succeed or not.

'If the possession doesn't work, it means I've done something unnecessary.'

It might have been better to just let her energy rampage and let her die.

Or perhaps he should have sought out the second disciple, Jang Neung-ak, first.

The plan to unify the two forces after possessing them both had gone awry from the very first move.

Mok Gyeong-un stared intently at Wi So-yeon.

'I can't kill her either.'

If he killed her right away, the problem would grow bigger.

He couldn't make the Society Leader an enemy now because he needed to obtain clues from him.

He couldn't even face him yet.

'I need to change the plan.'

A different approach was necessary.

If possession doesn't work, should he turn Wi So-yeon into a living corpse using the Six People Spirit Summoning Technique?

But he wasn't confident if that would be possible.

After breaking through the blocked energy in her body, Wi So-yeon's unstable energy had subsided, and her martial prowess had risen much higher than before.

The Six People Spirit Summoning Technique might not work.

He needed a way to control Wi So-yeon somehow, but what should he do...?

At that moment,

Wi So-yeon, who had placed her hand on Mok Gyeong-un's cheek, gathered her courage and spoke.

"I, I can keep the promise."

'!?'

Promise?

Did they make any promises?

As he was pondering, Mok Gyeong-un traced back her words and finally recalled it.

[You want to have me? Then try to break this cursed power as well.]

'Huh?'

Is that what she's talking about now?

As he was puzzled, Wi So-yeon, with a bright red face, avoided eye contact, turned her head, and spoke shyly.

"You are my life's savior."

"Savior?"

"Y-Yes."

"..."

Mok Gyeong-un stared intently at her.

As he stared too intently, Wi So-yeon, who couldn't understand his feelings, became confused.

It was already too embarrassing to say these words, so why was he just staring at her without saying anything?

He had said with his own mouth that he wanted to have her and even risked his life to help her overcome the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians.

So she said she acknowledged it, but why was he hesitating?

Or could it be that he wanted her to say something else?

Feeling restless, Wi So-yeon cleared her throat and spoke.

“Ahem. I... I don’t... dislike you either.”

“...”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes became peculiar.

Mok Gyeong-un was not insensitive.

He could sense that the emotions emanating from her had clearly changed from before.

Perhaps this woman now saw him as a man.

‘Emotions...’

It was still an unfamiliar territory.

However, this emotion was worth exploring.

It was a slightly different concept from loyalty bound by mere words.

The corners of Mok Gyeong-un’s mouth twitched.

Then,

“If you don’t dislike me, it means you like me.”

“What? N-No. Rather than that...”

It was at that very moment.

Mok Gyeong-un wrapped his arm around her slender waist.

Then, he pulled her close to him.

As a result, the bare skin of the two, who were naked, completely touched.

“Eek!”

Wi So-yeon unknowingly let out a sound.

She was not only startled by Mok Gyeong-un’s sudden action but also didn’t know what to do.

Although she had heard about relationships between men and women in passing from those around her, including Gi Ok-ryeon, it was impossible for it to reach the ears of someone with a limited lifespan.

But those words she had brushed off suddenly came to mind.

‘...I can’t handle it.’

Wi So-yeon felt like her face was burning.

As she trembled like that, Mok Gyeong-un whispered in her ear.

“Then will you become my woman?”

“Your... Your woman?”

At those words, Wi So-yeon’s eyes trembled.

She had never even thought about becoming someone's woman in the first place.

But not only was she feeling strange emotions towards Mok Gyeong-un, but hearing these words made her face feel so hot that it seemed like it would melt.

To her, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

"Why aren't you answering?"

"..."

"If you don't answer, I'll take it as you don't want to..."

-Swish!

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un tried to loosen his arm that was wrapped around her waist.

Then, Wi So-yeon hurriedly wrapped her arms around Mok Gyeong-un's neck and spoke, her shyness reaching its peak.

"W-Who said I don't want to? It's... It's just too sudden. We don't know each other yet..."

"We can get to know each other from now on."

"What?"

It was at that very moment.

“Aaah!”

A sensation she had never experienced before, starting from below, caused a moan to escape Wi So-yeon’s lips.

Startled, she squirmed her waist, not knowing what to do.

‘It... It went in.’

It was too sudden.

For her, who had suffered from the pain of Meridian Blockage for a long time, this did not belong to the axis of pain at all.

However, it was extremely perplexing.

It was completely different from what she had heard.

She thought she would go through a gentler process, but he had entered so roughly.

“Haa... Haa... You... Too sudden...”

“I thought you said we should get to know each other.”

-Flushed!

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Wi So-yeon squirmed, not knowing what to do, and buried her face in his chest.

Why was this fellow so blunt and beastly, contrary to his appearance?

It was too embarrassing.

Although they were the only ones who were conscious around them, what kind of sudden act was this in the middle of the courtyard?

“Why are you doing this? Could it be that you’re embarrassed? It’s just the two of us anyway.”

-Swish!

With those words, Mok Gyeong-un moved his waist.

“Urgh.”

Caught off guard by Mok Gyeong-un’s movement, Wi So-yeon trembled and bit her lips tightly.

It was hard to hold back the sound that was about to burst out of her mouth involuntarily.

“You... You really...”

This bad guy.

She had given him permission, but why was he pushing her like this?

Wi So-yeon pleaded in a whisper.

“Please, let’s go inside...”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

Then, he stood up from his spot, still holding Wi So-yeon in his arms, and entered the main hall.

Before long, intense cries of passion burst out from inside the main hall.

Chapter 167 – Variables (3)

On the roof of a high tower, someone was concentrating with one hand forming a seal.

It was none other than Cho Tae-cheong.

Sensing the strong spiritual power once again, he was spreading a barrier in all directions, trying to determine the location.

‘Crafty fellow.’

Cho Tae-cheong clicked his tongue.

If the level is higher than that of Blue Sprit, they don’t hide themselves.

It’s because they have reached a level where even the masters of the martial world or the Imaemangnyang cannot easily subdue them.

However, this soul knows how to hide itself.

Moreover, when it noticed his presence in that brief moment, it changed its location.

‘It’s fast enough to evade the Toru.’

Toru.

It was a Imaemangnyang-level evil spirit that Cho Tae-cheong used as his servant spirit.

This Toru, known as the Red Falling Star of Mount Kunlun, was faster than the maximum speed of a Blood-Sweating Horse, yet it couldn't catch this soul.

As Cho Tae-cheong was concentrating, the muscles on his face twitched, and his expression changed.

"The route is clearly intentional."

Speaking in a hoarse voice, Cho Tae-cheong's expression returned to normal.

In his original state, Cho Tae-cheong spoke as if having a conversation.

"I know."

This crafty being was luring his pursuit.

Otherwise, there was no way it would periodically reveal its energy like this.

As a result, Cho Tae-cheong could be certain.

"It's trying to hide something."

If it's intentionally luring, it's clearly to conceal something.

Whether it's a companion or whatever else.

However, there was something this soul didn't know.

"It's good to use your head, but is it really just one?"

Cheong-ryeong, holding a long pipe, was rapidly moving and constantly changing locations.

She intentionally revealed her energy to let the diviner sense her presence.

Of course, it was to move away from Mok Gyeong-un.

-Whoosh!

As a spiritual body, she could fly in the sky, and unless one was an expert at the peak of the Transcendent Realm or the Transformation Realm, it was difficult to perfectly keep up with her movements.

However, something was continuously following her.

'How annoying.'

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

It seemed to be the diviner's servant spirit that had sensed her.

The demonic energy emanating from the servant spirit was no ordinary matter.

If her level hadn't risen to that of a Blue Spirit, it would have been strong enough to catch up to her.

Perhaps, based on her estimation,

‘Imaemangnyang.’

Its level seemed to have reached that of an Imaemangnyang.

At a glance, she had almost been caught up once, and judging from the strange horns and sheep-like appearance, it was probably the Red Falling Star Toru of Mount Kunlun.

To think he would command an evil spirit of this level as his servant spirit, he was no ordinary fellow.

However, her current level had reached that of an Indigo Spirit.

She could sufficiently shake it off...

-Startled!

Suddenly, Cheong-ryeong’s eyes sharpened.

It was because she sensed a shadow looming over her.

The shadow was making huge wing flaps.

-Ha!

Cheong-ryeong looked back in disbelief.

This was not the Toru Imaemangnyang.

She knew this being well, with the upper body of a giant bird and the lower body of a hornet.

‘Heum-won[1]...’

Heum-won.

This was also an Imaemangnyang residing in Mount Kunlun, like the Toru.

‘Two of them?’

This was completely unexpected.

She had thought it was troublesome enough to deal with an evil spirit of Imaemangnyang level, but to think he was controlling not one, but two Imaemangnyang.

This was already a monster belonging to the upper ranks of diviners.

‘It’s not just troublesome...’

And at that very moment, the giant bird with a hornet’s lower body fired sharp spikes at Cheong-ryeong.

-Swish swish swish swish swish!

‘Tsk.’

-Swish!

Cheong-ryeong quickly dodged it and changed direction.

But at that moment, something was recklessly charging from the front.

It was the other Imaemangnyang, the Toru.

The Toru in front, the Heum-won behind.

‘This is really a bind.’

With Imaemangnyang-level evil spirits blocking the front and back, it was truly a situation of being trapped.

“Mmm.”

Wi So-yeon, moaning passionately, panted and wrapped her legs around Mok Gyeong-un’s waist.

Mok Gyeong-un originally had no desire for such relationships.

However, this relationship, which he had started to make her his own with a purpose, was bringing a certain level of interest.

‘Is this what pleasure is?’

It was a strange sensation he was experiencing for the first time, but it wasn’t bad.

He had thought of it as merely an act done for reproduction, regardless of the species, but Wi So-yeon, drenched in sweat, embracing him and crying out passionately, piqued his interest.

She had been so embarrassed when they first engaged in this act that she didn't know what to do.

But at some point, she too was yearning for him without hiding her excitement.

-Thud!

"Aah!"

Whenever Mok Gyeong-un moved his hips, Wi So-yeon cried out.

This sound was strangely stimulating.

He had intended to make her submit appropriately and then finish, but due to this stimulation, he was already holding Wi So-yeon for the fifth time without rest.

-Thud!

Mok Gyeong-un pushed Wi So-yeon against the wall, grabbed her thighs, lifted them, and pressed them upward.

"Haa... Haa..."

The rough breathing of Wi So-yeon, who had completely become a woman, and the way she looked at Mok Gyeong-un were extremely sensual.

Looking at her face, Mok Gyeong-un felt a strange feeling.

'...'

It was because Wi So-yeon overlapped with Cheong-ryeong.

He had perceived them as completely different beings, nothing more, nothing less, but when he learned about the sensation of pleasure from this act and received stimulation, Cheong-ryeong occasionally overlapped with her.

‘Strange.’

He didn’t know why this was happening.

But why was it more stimulating to think of Cheong-ryeong through Wi So-yeon?

With that, Mok Gyeong-un drove into her even more roughly.

“Aah!”

Wi So-yeon’s slender waist shook violently.

Panting and gasping for breath, Wi So-yeon embraced Mok Gyeong-un and whispered in a seductive voice.

“More... More!”

She wanted to continue becoming one with Mok Gyeong-un.

This pleasure was stimulating and too addictive.

“Haa... Haa...”

The sweat-soaked Wi So-yeon lay in Mok Gyeong-un's arms, exhaling roughly.

It was her first time knowing a man, and she understood why Gi Ok-ryeon and those around her made such a fuss about it.

It was truly a pleasure that was hard to escape from.

Wi So-yeon glanced at Mok Gyeong-un's face as she lay there.

Although his face was flushed, unlike her, he showed no signs of fatigue at all.

'Beast...'

He was truly like a beast.

He was so aggressive that it was hard to handle at first.

Even a martial artist who had trained and cultivated martial arts would get tired after a few times and need time to recover, but this guy had none of that.

[We can do more, right?]

She lost count of how many times he had said that.

Wi So-yeon, who had been staring intently at Mok Gyeong-un, asked shyly.

"You... Is this really your first time?"

"I told you it was."

“Then why are you so...”

She couldn't seem to finish her sentence, trembling her lips, and buried her head deeper into Mok Gyeong-un's chest.

Asking this question was actually meaningless.

Because she was convinced that she was his first woman, as he had been rough at first but gradually became more delicate.

‘...Woman.’

It was a truly strange feeling.

After becoming one with this guy, her heart was strangely drawn to him even more.

Should she say that her desire to rely on him had grown stronger?

Is this her as a woman?

‘Strange. Really...’

When she thought she could die at any moment due to the curse of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, she had never felt such emotions or feelings before.

There was no one to rely on in the face of death.

But now, she felt that life or death wouldn't be so bad if she was with this man.

Does emotion shake even reason like this?

But then, Mok Gyeong-un suddenly sat up and said.

“I should get going for now.”

“Going?”

“Yes.”

“Stay a bit longer...”

“What?”

“No, never mind.”

Wi So-yeon, who had tried to hold onto Mok Gyeong-un, stopped.

Although she was growing fonder of this man, she felt that if she revealed such emotions here, she would appear easy.

[When men are confident that they have you in their net, their attitude changes drastically. So, Young Lady, if you find a man you like, make sure to keep this in mind.]

[This?]

[Push and pull.]

[Push and pull?]

[You shouldn't appear too easy to a man.]

It was what Gi Ok-ryeon had always told her.

If she pushed and pulled appropriately, the man would have no choice but to be desperate for her.

But Gi Ok-ryeon herself couldn't follow her own advice whenever she was in front of Woo Ho-rang, the Grand Leader of Giant Watchtower Group.

"Do you have any clothes to wear?"

At that moment, Mok Gyeong-un asked her.

She shook her head and replied.

"There are none here. If you want women's clothes, I can lend you mine."

"...Are you perhaps joking?"

"..."

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Wi So-yeon turned her head away.

She had to be faithful to the push and pull, but it was becoming increasingly difficult with this man.

Rather, she wanted to tease him.

Does the heart naturally follow after giving one's body?

“Ahem. If you’re looking for men’s clothes that would fit you, there are some in the guest hall of the adjacent building.”

“Thank you.”

“Your way of speaking... When it’s just the two of us, you can speak comfortably.”

Wi So-yeon twisted her hair, feeling unnecessarily shy.

She felt it would be fine for this man to call her by her name.

At this, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and said.

“I’m afraid that might be difficult.”

“What?”

“I’m more comfortable with this way of speaking for now.”

“You find that comfortable?”

“Yes. If a time comes when I can speak comfortably, I’ll do so then.”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Wi So-yeon couldn’t hide her confusion.

Why was he doing this when they could speak comfortably when it was just the two of them?

Could it be that he was drawing a line?

She was about to feel a bit disappointed when Mok Gyeong-un embraced her, pulled her close, and let her rest her head on his shoulder.

“Since you’ve become my woman, I can expect a lot of help from you in the future, right?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s whispered words, Wi So-yeon’s face flushed red.

This guy was playing with her heart.

Even though she knew that, why did it make her feel excited?

‘No. I have to push and pull.’

Wi So-yeon shook her head from side to side, gently pushed Mok Gyeong-un away, and spoke coyly.

“Of course I’ll help you since you saved my life. But whether I actively help you or not will be determined by what you do.”

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

Then, he calmly told her what he had in mind.

Upon hearing it, one of Wi So-yeon’s eyebrows arched upward.

“You... Do you really want me to do that?”

“Yes. I hope you can do that for me.”

“...”

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Wi So-yeon's expression turned dissatisfied.

It wasn't difficult to grant his request, but she wasn't sure if it was the right thing to do.

So, Wi So-yeon asked.

“...Even if my subordinates agree, will Second Senior Brother be willing to accept it?”

“Don't worry about that.”

“Don't worry?”

“Yes. That's a problem I'll go and solve now.”

‘!?’

Wi So-yeon frowned at Mok Gyeong-un's words.

His drive was really fast, but was this possible?

Night had fallen, and it was dark outside.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had left Wi So-yeon's residence, opened the pouch at his waist to check.

Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang's eyeball inside was safe.

Worried that the rampaging True Divine Yin Energy of the Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians might freeze not only his clothes but also this and the spare wooden puppet, he had thrown them far away, but they were unexpectedly intact.

‘Shall we go then?’

Mok Gyeong-un unleashed his lightness skill and flew.

Following the main road for about fifty zhang, Mok Gyeong-un noticed a gloomy-looking ancestral shrine building located in the eastern corner of the inner city.

It was a considerably large building, and Cheong-ryeong’s energy, which had disappeared, could be felt there.

Entering inside, there was an altar, and on the wall, there was a tattered scroll and a well-preserved portrait next to it.

‘This is?’

Surprisingly, the figure depicted in that portrait was,

‘Cheong-ryeong?’

It was a portrait of Cheong-ryeong.

However, Cheong-ryeong’s attire in this portrait was different from usual.

She was wearing a red ceremonial dress that a bride would wear and was even wearing makeup.

This made Mok Gyeong-un puzzled.

Why was such a portrait hanging on the altar of this ancestral shrine?

And why was the other scroll, which seemed to be another portrait, torn to shreds, making it impossible to recognize its form?

But then, a voice was heard.

-What are you staring at so intently? Mortal.

“Cheong-ryeong?”

Cheong-ryeong was seen leaning against one side of the altar.

Holding a long pipe and exhaling smoke, her face looked haggard for some reason.

Although she was conserving her spiritual power and not revealing her energy, she looked quite exhausted.

So, Mok Gyeong-un asked.

“What happened?”

-A more troublesome matter than I thought arose.

“A troublesome matter?”

-Yes.

“...Does it have to do with you disappearing without possessing her midway?”

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Cheong-ryeong sighed and said.

-Well, it's not unrelated since it happened because of that. But there seems to be a diviner of at least Pavilion Master level inside the inner city.

“Of course there would be diviners...”

-Yes. But he's no ordinary fellow.

At her warning, Mok Gyeong-un stroked his chin and said.

“Judging from Cheong-ryeong's words, he must be truly powerful.”

-He commands two Imaemangnyang-level servant spirits.

“Hmm?”

At this, Mok Gyeong-un couldn't hide his surprise.

If they were Imaemangnyang-level, they would be highly ranked evil spirits equivalent to the third grade.

However, he had heard that even diviners had difficulty controlling evil spirits above the level of monstrous beasts, so if he could command two of them as servant spirit, he must be a diviner with no ordinary curse power.

“Did you fight him?”

-If I had fought, do you think it would have simply ended?

"I suppose you're right."

With two Imaemangnyang, even Cheong-ryeong would have had difficulty facing them without properly unleashing her spiritual power.

She had desperately escaped using the minimum amount of power.

After almost an hour and a half of playing hide-and-seek, she was able to evade them.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue and said.

-By the way, mortal, why are you so late? You're someone who didn't take long to absorb death energy, so what's so difficult...

"I had to find another way since possession didn't work."

-What? Ah... Right. That's what happened.

Preoccupied with shaking off the diviner and the two evil spirits, she suddenly recalled the reason why the possession had failed.

She didn't know what that strange phenomenon was.

The body of that mortal wench who had tried to absorb her was too bizarre.

"Why didn't you possess her? Or was it not possible?"

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, Cheong-ryeong replied as if she was in a difficult position.

-I don't know. Even I don't—.

"You don't know?"

-I felt like something would happen if I possessed the body of that mortal wench who resembled me.

"Something would happen?"

-It's hard to explain to you. That wench's body strongly pulled my spiritual body, and it was the first time I experienced such a phenomenon.

"...The body pulled the spiritual body?"

-Yes.

"Hmm."

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un furrowed his brows.

Even as a diviner, he had gained some knowledge, but he had never heard of the phenomenon Cheong-ryeong described.

He would probably need to consult with diviner Jo Ui-gong or examine the various books related to exorcism techniques he possessed.

Then, Cheong-ryeong spoke.

-We're in a bind. Since possession failed.

“No. That’s not it.”

-Not it? But to control that mortal wench according to the plan...

“I think I can control her.”

-Huh? What do you mean?

Even if it was in exchange for saving her life from the rampaging Heavenly Yin Absolute Meridians, controlling her might be difficult due to her status as the Society Leader’s disciple and a candidate for the successor position.

To the puzzled Cheong-ryeong, Mok Gyeong-un nonchalantly said.

“I couldn’t make her a subordinate, so I made her my woman.”

-What? Your woman?

What the hell was he talking about?

How did he make her his woman? It was incomprehensible... Wait a minute...

-You can’t mean...?

“Yes. We had sex.”

‘!!!!!!’

At Mok Gyeong-un's blunt expression, Cheong-ryeong's face instantly stiffened.

She thought this guy was a stone-like fellow who had no interest in such relationships between men and women, but she never expected such words to come out of his mouth.

Although she had died and become a wandering soul, for some reason, it felt embarrassing.

But when Cheong-ryeong unconsciously imagined it, her face turned red, and her expression distorted.

'...Wait, that mortal wench resembles me.'

Chapter 168 – Variables (4)

-You can't mean...?

"Yes. We had sex."

'!!!!!!'

At Mok Gyeong-un's blunt expression, Cheong-ryeong's face stiffened.

She thought this guy was a stone-like fellow who had no interest in such relationships between men and women, but she never expected such words to come out of his mouth.

Although she had become a wandering soul, she couldn't help but feel embarrassed.

But when she suddenly thought of it, Cheong-ryeong's face turned red, and her expression distorted.

'...Wait, that mortal wench resembles me.'

At this, Cheong-ryeong couldn't hide her perplexity.

Although their auras were different, if one only looked at their appearances, she and Wi So-yeon resembled each other so much that they could be mistaken for sisters or twins.

Yet, knowing that, he still had sex with her?

For a moment, Cheong-ryeong imagined herself in Wi So-yeon's place.

Because of that,

-You! You! You're really going off the rails.

"What?"

-That mortal wench resembles me...

Cheong-ryeong couldn't finish her sentence.

She wanted to confront him, asking if he had relations with her knowing she resembled herself, but she became too embarrassed to continue.

'This, this guy is really...'

Was he asking because he didn't know why she was acting like this?

It would have been fine if she didn't resemble her.

But seeing that mortal wench reminded her of herself, and the fact that he had relations with her made her feel not only embarrassed but also icky and strange.

Could it be that this guy was thinking of her while sleeping with that wench?

She thought to herself.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un spoke.

“Hmm. I don’t know what you’re trying to say, but there doesn’t seem to be any particular problem. If there is, it would be better to handle it beforehand.”

-...

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, Cheong-ryeong furrowed her brows.

Was she making a fuss all by herself?

Judging from his attitude, he seemed as cold as usual, no different from any other matter.

Did that mean he truly had no feelings or ulterior motives when he slept with that mortal wench Wi So-yeon, who resembled her?

‘...Is it even stranger to expect such emotions from him in the first place?’

Come to think of it, Mok Gyeong-un rarely expressed any emotions other than the murderous obsession to find the culprit who killed his grandfather.

Even his smiling face was merely a false emotion to make others feel at ease and let their guard down.

The only time he showed a genuine smile was when he saw blood.

Considering that, he must have had relations with her for a purpose, nothing more, nothing less.

In the first place, it was questionable whether he had any desire for the opposite sex.

‘Well, if that’s the case, I don’t need to...’

No, it still bothers me.

It keeps nagging at me.

After becoming a wandering soul, she thought all emotions except the desire to resolve her grudge had disappeared, but it seemed that wasn’t the case.

Rather than not knowing, it was inevitable to feel bothered and icky once she found out.

However, since he was nonchalant about it, she felt awkward bringing it up further, fearing that she would look strange if she made a fuss alone.

Then, Mok Gyeong-un approached her and pointed at something, saying,

“But what is that?”

-That?

“Yes. No matter how I look at it, the portrait painted on that scroll looks like you, Cheong-ryeong.”

-...

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong closed her mouth.

She had a feeling he would ask about herself in that scroll anyway.

'I should have torn it apart.'

She had considered doing that, fearing that he would become curious.

However, she couldn't bring herself to do it.

That was the last trace of herself left in this world, and that person...

Then, Mok Gyeong-un chuckled and said,

"Wearing a red and elegant bridal dress with a golden crown, you look just like a blooming peony flower. Did you have a wedding ceremony or something?"

'!?'

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, Cheong-ryeong's eyes trembled.

[You look like a single red peony flower.]

A voice rippling through her mind.

That voice, which had become faint as a hundred years had passed, came to mind.

She slowly looked at Mok Gyeong-un.

What a coincidence.

To think she would hear those words again through this mortal fellow.

It was so nostalgic that it felt truly distant.

‘Hm?’

Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes twinkled with interest.

He couldn’t help but be puzzled by Cheong-ryeong’s distant expression, which he had never seen before.

Could there be a story related to this scroll painting?

Seeing her make such a face, he couldn’t ask any more about the portrait of her wearing a bridal dress.

But then, something caught Mok Gyeong-un’s eye.

‘!?’

It was the incense burner in front of the old altar.

The shrine was covered in dust and filled with cobwebs, looking like a place no one visited.

However, the only clean things inside the shrine were that scroll portrait and this incense burner.

The traces of incense sticks in the incense burner.

And only the floor in front of it was not covered in dust.

'Is someone visiting this place regularly?'

Otherwise, there was no way only that spot would be like that.

In this old shrine, there was a scroll portrait presumed to be of Cheong-ryeong, and someone was visiting it regularly...

Could they be Cheong-ryeong's blood relatives or acquaintances?

It was at that very moment.

-Startled!

Mok Gyeong-un looked in a certain direction.

Then, he quickly took out the wooden puppet from his bosom and sent a hurried telepathic message to Cheong-ryeong.

-Cheong-ryeong!

-I sensed it too.

She had sensed it almost at the same time as Mok Gyeong-un.

Although it was a very faint energy, it was almost identical to the vibration of that curse power.

That meant the owner of this curse power had come very close.

Mok Gyeong-un formed a hand seal and chanted a small incantation.

Then, Cheong-ryeong's body transformed into smoke and seeped into the wooden puppet Mok Gyeong-un was holding.

-Sizzle!

After sealing Cheong-ryeong inside the wooden puppet, Mok Gyeong-un put it back into his bosom.

Then, he hesitated as he was about to go outside.

He sensed that the faint curse power was felt outside the shrine's door.

'Fast.'

So, he tried to hide his presence by using his movement technique to fly to the ceiling.

It was at that very moment.

-Whoosh!

Suddenly, the surroundings were engulfed in dark shadows, and Mok Gyeong-un's figure, who was about to kick off the ground, froze in that state.

'!?'

What the hell was this?

It was such a strange phenomenon.

His body was frozen in this posture, trying to leap up, and wouldn't move.

His entire body felt as if it were paralyzed, and he couldn't feel any sensations at all, which was something he had never experienced before.

He had to hide his presence right away, but what was going on?

As he was puzzled,

-Creak!

The door opened, and someone entered.

Although the shrine was shrouded in darkness, Mok Gyeong-un could see clearly.

It was a man who appeared to be in his early to mid-forties, wearing a gray martial arts uniform with a yin-yang symbol.

Despite his somewhat ordinary-looking appearance, Mok Gyeong-un could tell that he was from the Primal Killing Pavilion due to the diviner attire he was wearing.

'Exorcism technique?'

Then, was his body freezing also due to an exorcism technique?

If that was the case, it was truly astonishing.

What kind of exorcism technique was this?

All five senses and sensations were completely numb, and only his consciousness was intact.

-Mortal? Mortal? What's wrong with you?

Cheong-ryeong also urgently asked about the strange phenomenon that had befallen Mok Gyeong-un.

However, even though his consciousness was intact, he couldn't move his entire body, so Mok Gyeong-un couldn't respond to her words.

Why the hell couldn't he move his body?

-Thump thump!

The sound of footsteps approached along with the diviner.

Seeing the diviner like this, Mok Gyeong-un thought that this technique, whatever it was, was more dangerous than anything he had known before.

A technique that could stop everything except consciousness, what kind of absurd technique was this?

Wasn't it a method that could kill anyone if one wanted to?

-Mortal! Mortal!

Cheong-ryeong's voice rang out loudly.

Thinking that Mok Gyeong-un's condition was dangerous, she was contemplating whether to break the wooden puppet and come out right away.

-Damn it!

As the diviner approached within ten steps, she finally decided to break the wooden puppet and come out.

At this rate, they would be caught with their eyes open.

-Crack!

As Cheong-ryeong unleashed her demonic power to break the wooden puppet, it cracked.

It was at that very moment.

-Stop!

-Huh? You?

Cheong-ryeong, who was about to break the wooden puppet and come out, stopped.

-Mortal, are you alright?

-Yes. Suddenly, all my senses have returned.

For some reason, the moment Cheong-ryeong cracked the wooden puppet to come out, all the sensations in his body returned.

But then, an even stranger thing happened.

The moment his senses returned, the approaching diviner disappeared.

It wasn't in the sense that he 'moved quickly.'

He suddenly vanished from sight as if he had never been there in the first place.

It was as if he 'became unrecognizable.'

-What?

-...What the hell is this?

He had clearly sensed the curse power beyond the shrine door.

And didn't he walk right up to him?

But he suddenly disappeared.

Since his senses had been frozen, it was difficult to even grasp the presence or absence of energy as he disappeared without a trace right in front of him.

-We need to get out of here for now.

-I agree. Hurry.

Whether it was a technique or something else, if they couldn't accurately comprehend it, there was no way to confront it.

The only answer was to unconditionally leave this place.

-Pat!

Mok Gyeong-un immediately flew out.

At the same time.

-Drip!

Blood flowed down the forehead of Cho Tae-cheong, who was sitting on the roof of a high tower, forming a sword finger seal.

At the same time, Cho Tae-cheong furrowed his brows with an incredulous look.

What the hell was going on?

The Time-Space All Deception Technique, an advanced forbidden technique that wouldn't be undone unless the caster released it, suddenly broke apart, despite having some limitations.

Fortunately, since he hadn't touched anything alive during the technique, the repercussions were minor.

However, this was an unexpected variable.

'That guy... What the hell is he?'

This was the first time... No, it wasn't the first time a forbidden technique had broken midway, but the situation was completely different from back then.

That monster had transcended the realm of humans, making it possible.

But the boy who was in the darkness that he had seen through the Time-Space All Deception Technique just now.

It was too dark to see clearly even from ten steps away, but at a glance, he was a young lad who hadn't even reached adulthood, around 17-18 years old.

There was no way such a young lad could have done anything.

In the first place, from the moment he was caught in the Time-Space All Deception Technique, he couldn't do anything.

Then, Cho Tae-cheong's expression distorted, and his face changed.

Then, he spoke in a hoarse voice.

"Don't be overconfident just because it's a forbidden technique. There is no perfect technique in this world."

As soon as he finished speaking, Cho Tae-cheong's face returned to normal.

Then,

"I know that much. But this technique doesn't include living beings as subjects of recognition. You know that too, don't you? Wait a minute... Could it be?"

-Crack! Crack!

Cho Tae-cheong, who distorted his expression again, spoke in a hoarse voice.

“Kehehehe. You found the answer.”

As soon as he finished speaking, Cho Tae-cheong’s face returned to its original state, and the corners of his mouth curled up bitterly.

“I see.”

The high-level wandering soul that had been sweeping through the inner city of the Heaven and Earth Society.

The location he had predicted while estimating the path of the spiritual power that had shaken off the two servant spirit was none other than that old shrine.

He was already curious about what it was trying to hide.

But with this, it seemed he had found the answer.

Meanwhile, Mok Gyeong-un was heading somewhere quickly.

Cheong-ryeong asked him,

-Where are you going? For now, let’s return to Shadow Clan and...

-No. We need to hurry before that.

-What do you mean? That diviner fellow who used that strange and unknown technique will be desperate to find you and me, so we should lay low until we come up with a countermeasure...

-That's why I think we need to hurry even more.

-What?

-I also saw his face, but he briefly saw my face too. It won't take him long to find me.

-You can't mean...?

-If I can kill him, I should.

Murderous intent flickered in Mok Gyeong-un's eyes as he spoke those words.

The place Mok Gyeong-un was heading to was none other than the vicinity of the high tower where the Primal Killing Pavilion's estate was located.

Chapter 169 – Cho Tae-cheong (1)

After traveling a considerable distance using lightness skill, Mok Gyeong-un stopped.

It was none other than the vicinity of the high tower where the Primal Killing Pavilion estate was located.

The high tower, known as the tallest building in the inner city except for the main hall where the Society Leader resided, was attached to the Primal Killing Pavilion estate.

Therefore, although Mok Gyeong-un didn't completely know the layout of the inner city yet, it wasn't too difficult for him to find it.

Cheong-ryeong's voice reached Mok Gyeong-un's ears.

-Mortal. Are... Aren't you going too far?

-Too far?

-Even if you've crossed the threshold, if something like earlier happens again, you might even die instead.

Cheong-ryeong was concerned about the previous situation.

That strange technique that had immobilized even the rapidly strengthened Mok Gyeong-un.

If he were to be caught in it and have his neck slashed, it would lead to an irreversible situation.

-It's not too late yet. Let's go back.

-No. If we go back, it'll be too late.

-Sigh. What's too late?

-Someone capable of using such a strange technique, who knows what they might do.

Mok Gyeong-un was concerned about a different aspect than Cheong-ryeong.

If it was something that could be dealt with to some extent, there was no need to rush.

However, if it was a technique that was completely impossible to deal with, taking the initiative first was the answer.

Mok Gyeong-un thought they needed to handle it before the other party could do anything.

-Goodness, you really don't listen at times like this, mortal.

Cheong-ryeong clicked her tongue.

Once this mortal fellow made up his mind, he never yielded.

Unless she manifested and forcibly dragged him away, there was probably no way to dissuade him.

So, Cheong-ryeong said,

-Tsk tsk. There's no other choice. Avoid a direct confrontation.

-We should.

If they went in directly, it would be equivalent to letting the other party know they had come.

To make it difficult to see with the naked eye, he had been moving through dense shadows the entire way.

Since crossing the threshold, it had become difficult for ordinary people to sense his presence.

So, the guards standing in front of the estate were chatting among themselves, unaware that he was nearby.

-Fortunately, night has fallen.

At night, there are fewer people wandering around and more places to hide.

Mok Gyeong-un opened his spiritual sense and focused on his spiritual eye.

It was to identify the most convenient route.

-Woosh!

‘...Ho.’

When he opened his spiritual eye, he saw two energies at the early stage of the Transcendent Realm beyond the wall.

‘To have two experts of the Transcendent Realm stationed here.’

The early stage of the Transcendent Realm was almost equivalent to the level of a Grand Master.

As Amjongju had said, it seemed to be true that the Society Leader valued the Primal Killing Pavilion and was thorough with security.

Moreover, most of the energies of the martial artists guarding the estate were at least first-rate experts or higher.

If one were to infiltrate out of mere curiosity, there was a high probability of suffering a setback.

Of course, Mok Gyeong-un didn't mind that at all now.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un's figure dispersed like mist.

It was the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps he had stolen from Eldest Young Master Na Yul-ryang.

The Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, when deliberately used, was so fast that it was difficult to detect with the naked eye, making it challenging even for experts of the Transcendent Realm to easily notice.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un instantly crossed the wall and entered.

Then, he quickly moved through the estate.

There were a total of fifteen buildings inside the estate.

Among them, the diviner who had used that bizarre technique beyond common sense on him would be present.

-Are you planning to search each one by one?

-I have to. But since that would take a lot of time, I should start with the main hall.

-Main hall?

-Yes.

A diviner with immense curse power capable of detecting even Cheong-ryeong's energy couldn't possibly be an ordinary person.

He speculated that they would be at least an executive-level figure within the Primal Killing Pavilion.

-Wouldn't it be easier to find them if you tell that Jo Ui-gong fellow about their appearance?

-Ho. That's a good idea.

Mok Gyeong-un agreed with Cheong-ryeong's suggestion.

Jo Ui-gong, who had become the Pavilion Master by overthrowing his former master and previous Primal Killing Pavilion Master In Seo-ok.

Then, he would immediately find out who this person was.

So, Mok Gyeong-un headed straight to the main hall building.

-Swish!

Throughout his use of the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, no one noticed Mok Gyeong-un's movements.

Before long, Mok Gyeong-un reached the main hall of the Primal Killing Pavilion.

Arriving in front of the main hall, Mok Gyeong-un surveyed the surroundings and sought a way to enter.

'Two at the entrance.'

Two experts at the Peak Realm were guarding it.

Since the door was closed, it was difficult to enter without them noticing.

Then, he spotted an open window on the 2nd floor of the main hall.

Although there were first-rate experts presumed to be escort warriors on the 2nd floor corridor, fortunately, there was no such person at the open window.

-Tap! Tap!

Mok Gyeong-un formed a hand seal and used the Six Yin Boundary Technique.

The Six Yin Boundary Technique was to detect curse power and prepare for any possible exorcism techniques.

A faint curse power was felt from the open window.

It seemed that an exorcism technique was set up.

‘The only answer is to disable the technique simultaneously with entering.’

-Tap! Tap!

‘Hariti Mudra!’

Mok Gyeong-un, who had formed a hand seal by bending his thumb and joining three fingers, chanted a technique of release and used the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps to insert his body into the open window while running upside down under the 3rd floor roof.

At the same time, Mok Gyeong-un changed his hand seal to a sword seal.

“Urgent and speedy. Release!”

As he extended the sword seal forward, the surroundings became quiet.

Although it seemed as if nothing had happened, the nine talismans attached to the wall crumbled into ashes.

-Sizzle!

‘The Nine Shadows Binding Technique?’

It was an exorcism technique where nine shadows bound the intruder and pierced holes in their limbs.

It was quite an aggressive technique.

As expected, the fact that it was set up meant that the window was intentionally left open.

However, it didn’t matter.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un used the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps again and moved through the corridor.

There were a total of six guard warriors guarding the 2nd floor corridor.

They were all at the first-rate level, but none of them were particularly a hindrance to Mok Gyeong-un.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un quickly moved while disabling the exorcism formations set up intermittently, and immediately went up the stairs to the upper floor.

Arriving at the 3rd floor corridor, Mok Gyeong-un paused for a moment.

‘Hmm.’

There was a cloud bridge connecting to the high tower.

Judging from the fact that it was set up for direct movement from the 3rd floor, it seemed that the high tower was also used by the executives within the Primal Killing Pavilion.

However, it was strange.

-Why are you stopping?

At Cheong-ryeong’s question, Mok Gyeong-un surveyed the surroundings and said,

-I don’t sense any energy.

-You don’t sense any energy?

-Yes.

The main hall building had up to 4 floors.

He knew that the Pavilion Master’s room was on the 4th floor, but there was no one guarding the 3rd floor.

Mok Gyeong-un’s spiritual sense had become even more sensitive since crossing the threshold.

However, on this floor, there were no traps or guards to be seen.

That made him even more wary.

Mok Gyeong-un looked up.

A single energy was felt on the upper floor.

It was very familiar, belonging to the current Pavilion Master, Jo Ui-gong.

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been carefully examining the surroundings, finally went upstairs.

After all, Pavilion Master Jo Ui-gong was superficially his master, and being bound by the Enslavement Chain, he was no different from a slave, so he had no choice but to follow Mok Gyeong-un's orders.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un stood in front of the Pavilion Master's room.

Mok Gyeong-un, preparing for any unforeseen circumstances, briefly formed the Hariti Mudra with his left hand and opened the door to the Pavilion Master's room with his right hand.

-Creak!

As the door opened and Mok Gyeong-un entered, his eyes narrowed.

The reason was,

'Illusion technique.'

An illusion technique was being used before his eyes.

Ordinary illusion techniques didn't work on Mok Gyeong-un, who had opened his spiritual eye.

It was because he could see that it was a false image created by curse power.

The scene shown by the illusion technique depicted Pavilion Master Jo Ui-gong sitting at his desk in the office.

However, in reality,

'Haa...'

Inside, Jo Ui-gong was seen naked, with his limbs bound, looking dazed.

"Heheheheh."

Jo Ui-gong wriggled his body and let out a bizarre laugh.

But his expression was distorted as if in pain.

-...We've been discovered.

-It seems so.

There was no way he would be in such a miserable state otherwise.

Mok Gyeong-un formed a hand seal and lightly waved his hand while chanting a technique of release.

-Swish!

Then, the illusion technique that had been set at the entrance of the Pavilion Master's room was dispelled.

As the illusion technique was released, the overlapping scene before his eyes disappeared, and the current Pavilion Master Jo Ui-gong's appearance, with his limbs restrained, became clear.

-Wait. Don't approach him.

At Cheong-ryeong's words, Mok Gyeong-un stopped in his tracks.

Even without her warning, he would have stopped because he had discovered something.

It was because of Jo Ui-gong.

-Squirm! Rumble!

"Ugh, haha!"

Jo Ui-gong's skin bulged out, and something was moving inside.

Its shape was quite revolting, resembling a centipede.

It was crawling all over Jo Ui-gong's skin, and whenever it did, Jo Ui-gong seemed to be in pain, bleeding and suffering.

However, this wasn't just one.

There seemed to be dozens, no, hundreds of them crawling all over his body.

-How vicious.

With those things burrowing into his entire body and feeding on him, it was only natural for him to lose his mind like that.

Mok Gyeong-un's eyes sharpened as he looked at the Enslavement Chain on Jo Ui-gong's arm.

The Enslavement Chain had dug into Jo Ui-gong's wrist.

-He must have fought against the restraints of the chain.

-It seems so.

The one who had reduced Jo Ui-gong to this state must have tried to find out who had placed the Enslavement Chain on him.

That's why they had committed such an act.

However, once bound by the Enslavement Chain, one could never betray.

Therefore, as the techniques clashed, it seemed to have left Jo Ui-gong in such a devastated state.

-Can you remove it?

At Cheong-ryeong's question, Mok Gyeong-un shook his head.

He had never seen such a technique before.

It was rather impressive that Jo Ui-gong hadn't died despite having such a large number of bugs crawling all over his skin.

-...It seems to be that guy.

-That guy? You mean him?

-Yes.

The existence that had immediately noticed Cheong-ryeong's presence and changed course with a technique that had taken away all of Mok Gyeong-un's sensations except for his consciousness.

It seemed that existence had reduced Jo Ui-gong to this state.

'Ah.'

Mok Gyeong-un, who had been staring intently at Jo Ui-gong, drew a line with his sword finger.

-Swish!

Then, a sharp murderous intent sliced through the air of the Pavilion Master's room.

Along with it, a red line appeared on Jo Ui-gong's neck, and then,

-Slide! Thud!

His head fell to the floor.

Mok Gyeong-un let out a soft breath.

Since he no longer had any value as a pawn, the only thing he could do for him was to end his life mercifully.

If he tried to forcibly keep him alive, it would only hold him back.

Mok Gyeong-un chuckled.

‘It’s not as easy as I thought.’

The exorcism skills of Jo Ui-gong, who had earned the title of Moon-level, were unrivaled among the diviners he had encountered.

For someone like him to be so helplessly defeated...

Now, he had a rough idea.

The existence that had reduced Jo Ui-gong to this state and chased them to their doorstep after detecting Cheong-ryeong’s spiritual power.

‘...Is it the one called Cho Tae-cheong?’

The person Jo Ui-gong had been afraid of, his senior brother.

He seemed to be the most likely candidate.

[Senior Brother Cho Tae-cheong possesses curse power comparable to our master. He is an existence I cannot possibly handle.]

Those were the words Jo Ui-gong had said to him.

Since he had subdued the previous Primal Killing Pavilion Master In Seo-ok, Mok Gyeong-un thought Jo Ui-gong would be able to sufficiently resist if he made full preparations.

However, it seemed he had underestimated him.

He might be an even more troublesome diviner than the arrogant and elderly In Seo-ok.

Perhaps he was an even stronger diviner than Jo Ui-gong had anticipated.

‘If I don’t kill him now, he’ll be a nuisance.’

Murderous intent flickered in Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes.

It was at that very moment.

-Thump!

The sound of footsteps echoed in Mok Gyeong-un’s ears.

-Thump!

The moment he heard the second footstep, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head back.

-Why are you doing that?

-...It’s him.

Mok Gyeong-un's memory was beyond imagination. He could remember even the habits of the other party just by the stride and sound of their footsteps, so he could immediately identify who it was.

It was undoubtedly the same existence that had entered the old shrine.

-Is he coming?

-Yes.

-What will you do?

---I have to kill him.

There was no need to hesitate. Even if this existence was a tremendous diviner, the key point was only one. If he killed him before he could use any techniques, that was it.

Mok Gyeong-un's actions were very swift once he made up his mind.

-Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un's figure dispersed like mist. Along with it, Mok Gyeong-un, who had used the Clear and Manifest Water Crossing Steps, ran out of the Pavilion Master's room and down the corridor using high-speed movement.

-Swish!

To Mok Gyeong-un, who was using high-speed movement, the existence walking down the corridor was moving at an extremely slow pace, no different from walking.

It was that ordinary-looking diviner wearing a gray yin-yang robe. This time, unlike in the shrine, his senses weren't sealed, so the diviner's energy was clearly visible.

However,

‘The energy is overlapping?’

Something was strange. As he approached the guy using high-speed movement, his energy was different from ordinary people.

After opening his spiritual eye, the energy became visible, and the guy’s energy appeared to be overlapping. It was as if he wasn’t a single existence but two together.

However, the overlapping energy, unlike the extraordinary curse power, was not much different from ordinary people who hadn’t cultivated martial arts in terms of the energy itself.

Therefore, there wouldn’t be much of a problem in killing him.

-Swish! Swish! Swish!

Mok Gyeong-un, who had instantly passed by the diviner and stood right behind him, raised his murderous intent in his sword hand.

Since he hadn’t cultivated martial arts, the diviner was still walking forward at a very slow pace.

So, Mok Gyeong-un tried to behead him in one strike.

-Whoosh!

But it was at that very moment. The forehead of the slowly walking diviner suddenly split open.

-Crackle!

Then,

-Startle!

For a moment, Mok Gyeong-un furrowed his brows. The reason was that the small energy overlapping the diviner suddenly surged to an unbelievable level.

And that energy was extremely ominous and inauspicious.

However, this wouldn't stop Mok Gyeong-un. Mok Gyeong-un tried to behead the diviner.

But just as the murderous intent of his sword hand was about to touch the neck,

-Kwang!

At that moment, something pressed down on Mok Gyeong-un's shoulder. Along with it, the floor shattered, and Mok Gyeong-un's figure fell straight down.

-Crash!

Mok Gyeong-un's figure, which had fallen to the 3rd floor, didn't stop there and broke through the floor again, descending further.

Mok Gyeong-un raised his head and looked at the existence pressing down on him. It was a pair of giant hooves.

Between those hooves, he saw a pair of ferocious eyes and strange horns.

-It's the Toru!

Cheong-ryeong hurriedly said to Mok Gyeong-un. This was the evil spirit from Mount Kunlun that had been chasing her.

As befitting a Imaemangnyang-level evil spirit, its demonic power was incomparable to that of fierce beasts or monstrous beasts.

Under the pressure of its force, Mok Gyeong-un's figure instantly broke through the 2nd floor and fell to the 1st floor.

-Crash! Crash!

The beast seemed to be trying to crush him to death like this. However, the moment it stepped on the solid 1st floor, unlike the wooden corridor,

-Crackle!

As the floor cracked in all directions, Mok Gyeong-un, who had channeled the crushing force through the soles of his feet, swung his sword hand towards Toru's face.

-Slash!

At that moment, one of Toru's ferocious eyes was split in half, and purple blood spurted out.

The Toru, with one eye slashed, let out a roar of pain.

-Roar!

The roar created shock waves and shook the surroundings. The walls shattered, and it was utter chaos.

Along with it, the enraged Imaemangnyang Toru thrashed about, trying to trample Mok Gyeong-un, who had cut out its eye, with its hooves.

‘What a nuisance.’

As Mok Gyeong-un dodged it and tried to counterattack, it was at that very moment.

-Clang! Clang!

The Toru’s hooves were blocked by some invisible barrier. What is this? As he was wondering,

“Hey you!”

‘!?’

A pretty short-haired girl in maid attire, with one hand forming a seal, urgently shouted to Mok Gyeong-un while gesturing.

“Follow me right now!”

Chapter 170 – Cho Tae-cheong (2)

Clang! Clang!

The Toru’s hooves were blocked by some invisible barrier.

‘What is this?’

Curse power could be felt from the barrier.

It was at that moment.

“Hey you!”

‘!?’

A pretty short-haired girl in maid attire, with one hand forming a seal, urgently said to Mok Gyeong-un while gesturing.

“Follow me right now!”

“Who are you?”

“Is this the time to ask that? Hurry up!”

At the girl’s words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

The curse power emanating from the girl was almost equivalent to the level of Moon-level diviner.

But why was this girl dressed like this?

As he was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un looked up.

-Roar!

-Clang! Clang!

The Imaemangnyang Toru roared and tried to break through the barrier with its hooves.

Mok Gyeong-un clicked his tongue inwardly.

Things had already escalated, so it seemed wrong to kill the beast.

With this level of commotion, people would gather from the surroundings, and there would soon be chaos.

So, Mok Gyeong-un said to the girl,

“Alright. But where do you want me to follow you?”

At Mok Gyeong-un’s words, the girl, while maintaining the seal with one hand, took something out from her waist with the other hand.

She put it on her finger and then rotated it in the air.

-Swish!

‘Ah?’

Surprisingly, something like smoke flowed out in the air, creating a circular entrance.

“I can’t maintain it for long. Hurry.”

With those words, the girl entered the circular entrance first.

So, Mok Gyeong-un, puzzled, followed her inside.

-Swish!

Then, the smoke dispersed, and the entrance disappeared.

Shortly after, red haze rose mysteriously from the 1st floor, and then sand grains surged upward all at once, filling the place where Mok Gyeong-un had been.

-Boom boom boom boom boom!

An irritated voice flowed from the mouth of the diviner Cho Tae-cheong, who had his right hand forming a seal.

“Look at this fellow.”

The voice was quite hoarse.

The diviner Cho Tae-cheong shook his head and clicked his tongue.

He had tried to make the one who dared to target him pay the price, but he had disappeared somewhere.

‘...Was it a diviner?’

He had felt considerable curse power from below for a moment.

With this level, it could be seen as a skill almost reaching the level of a Moon-level diviner.

Then, could it be that this was also an exorcism technique?

-Swish!

Cho Tae-cheong touched the back of his neck.

The foreign sensation felt in his palm.

It was because the flowing blood had stained his palm.

-Crunch!

Cho Tae-cheong gritted his teeth and spoke in a hoarse voice.

“If I hadn’t switched, you would have had your neck sliced and died.”

At his words, Cho Tae-cheong’s body trembled.

As if reacting to anger.

Cho Tae-cheong snorted and looked at the hole in the floor.

‘Is it that guy?’

While struggling to protect himself, he couldn’t properly see the guy’s face.

Cho Tae-cheong looked at the hole in disbelief.

“Haa...”

Who the hell was this guy?

Although he had been released from the Time-Space All Deception Technique thanks to the unexpected variable of the wandering soul in the old shrine, he couldn't accurately perceive what had happened until then because all his senses and consciousness had been taken away.

But he had come here right away?

Could it be that he was conscious?

'Or... Did he notice because of that wandering soul?'

Whatever the case, one thing was certain: the guy had noticed what had happened in the old shrine and targeted him.

Then, he needed to find this guy quickly.

If he were an ordinary person, he wouldn't dare to target him recklessly, but seeing him commit such a brazen act, he was quite a nuisance.

Then, someone hurriedly ran up the stairs and appeared.

"Are you alright..."

It was a guard warrior guarding the stairs leading to the 3rd floor.

The warrior, who had been startled by the sudden roar and come up, couldn't hide his perplexity upon seeing Cho Tae-cheong's face.

"What's that on your forehead..."

“Oh my... You saw it.”

“Pardon?”

It was right after those words ended.

-Stab!

“Urgh!”

Something sharp pierced through the guard warrior’s chest and protruded out.

The warrior, with his chest pierced, gasped for breath with eyes wide open as if they would tear apart, and then his head drooped as if he had lost all strength.

Cho Tae-cheong, who had been coldly watching him, looked up at the sky and said,

“Find the guy. He couldn’t have escaped far.”

-Flap!

As the order was given, the shadows that had been covering the surroundings disappeared with the sound of giant flapping wings.

-Swish!

‘Hmm?’

Mok Gyeong-un looked puzzled as he watched the entrance disappear like smoke.

He had learned various exorcism techniques, but this was the first time he had seen such a technique.

As he was amazed, the girl spoke from behind.

“What’s your identity?”

At that question, Mok Gyeong-un turned his head.

The short-haired girl in maid attire was standing with her arms crossed, looking at him with wide eyes as if in disbelief.

So, Mok Gyeong-un looked around.

“Where is this?”

“It’s the kitchen.”

Even without an answer, it seemed obvious that this place was the kitchen.

With the pots hanging on the walls and the chimney, anyone could tell this was the kitchen.

“Yes, it seems so.”

“Is that all you have to say? Despite experiencing the Disconnected Space Technique... No, that’s not important. More importantly, I asked about your identity first... Hmm. But you’re quite handsome, aren’t you?”

“Pardon?”

Mok Gyeong-un tilted his head at the girl’s incoherent words.

Then, the girl approached Mok Gyeong-un and stared at his face intently without hesitation.

-What’s with this mortal wench?

Cheong-ryeong spoke as if she was dissatisfied.

So, Mok Gyeong-un asked in puzzlement.

“Are you going to keep staring like that?”

“It’s not like your face will wear out from looking. Can’t I take a look?”

“ ... ”

Mok Gyeong-un shrugged his shoulders at her assertive attitude.

Then, he focused his spiritual sense and checked for any approaching presences.

However, no presence was felt in the surroundings.

Meanwhile, the girl smacked her lips and said,

“Ahh. What a pity. What a shame. Your face shows that you won’t even reach adulthood and will have a short life.”

“What?”

“I said you have the fate of a short life. Your neck will either break or be cut off. If it weren’t for that, you’d be the perfect husband for me.”

With those words, the girl giggled as if embarrassed, covering her flushed face with both hands.

Cheong-ryeong was annoyed by her unpredictable attitude.

-I don’t like this mortal wench for some reason.

-Is that so?

In Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes, she just seemed like a lively girl.

Of course, calling her a girl wasn’t quite accurate given her curvaceous figure.

She had a cute face and seemed to be around 17 or 18 years old at a glance.

She appeared to be around the same age as him.

Then, the girl spoke.

“Anyway, what’s your identity? Judging from your attire, you’re not from the Primal Killing Pavilion, and you seem like an ordinary person, so why did it target you?”

“By that, you mean?”

“That? Ah... How should I explain this? It’s really bothersome to explain this to an ordinary person, and they don’t easily believe it, so it’s difficult.”

“Just tell me, and I’ll understand it in my own way.”

“It’ll be hard. Ordinary people usually can’t accept such things.”

“If I couldn’t accept it, I would have had no reason to follow you through that smoke-made entrance earlier.”

“Ah! Is that so? What made you trust and follow me?”

“...”

Didn’t she tell him to follow her?

She seemed to have a rather inconsistent personality.

So, Mok Gyeong-un said,

“Your attire is that of a maid, but considering the technique earlier, are you perhaps a diviner?”

“Oh? It seems you’re not an ordinary person.”

At her question, Mok Gyeong-un smiled brightly and replied.

“I know a little.”

“A little? You’re just at the beginner level, yet it targeted you?”

“By that, do you mean the evil spirit from earlier?”

“...It’s not just a little. You’re also someone from this field, right?”

“This field?”

“Yes, this field. Seeing as it targeted you, you’re not from the Primal Killing Pavilion, right?”

Although her way of speaking was difficult to understand, Mok Gyeong-un could deduce two things from this question.

“This field” seemed to refer to those who dealt with exorcism techniques.

And she didn’t seem to be from the Primal Killing Pavilion.

If she were, she wouldn’t have helped him in the earlier situation.

So, Mok Gyeong-un nodded and said,

“No, I’m not.”

Strictly speaking, he could be considered to be from here since he was a disciple of the current Pavilion Master of the Primal Killing Pavilion, the deceased Jo Ui-gong.

However, saying so in this atmosphere would only make the girl more cautious of him.

Mok Gyeong-un’s response was well-timed.

The girl let out a sigh of relief and said,

“Phew. That’s a relief. I was worried that I might have gotten involved in an internal conflict at the Primal Killing Pavilion.”

“Is that so? It’s not like that.”

“It seemed that way. Otherwise, there’s no way that cursed Three-Eyed bastard would try to kill you.”

“Three-Eyed?”

Mok Gyeong-un asked in response to her words.

Did she just say Three-Eyed?

At Mok Gyeong-un’s question, the girl nodded and said,

“Yes, Three-Eyed. The Red Falling Star of Mount Kunlun, the evil spirit from earlier, is also a servant spirit controlled by that Three-Eyed bastard, right?”

‘!?’

At her words, Mok Gyeong-un’s eyes narrowed.

The diviner he had tried to kill earlier, no, Cho Tae-cheong was called Three-Eyed?

Mok Gyeong-un suddenly recalled an incident from the Corpse Blood Valley.

[So, what exactly is this Three-Eyed thing?]

-It's literally what it means. A three-eyed being. It's a malformed vessel born from a human womb. There are stories that when it's born, it brings misfortune.

[Misfortune?]

-But it's quite interesting. Even in ancient times, a Three-Eyed being would have been killed within a day of being born.

[I don't quite understand what you're saying, but are you saying that the diviner with the Taoist robe who has the Three-Eyes left you here?]

-Yes. I don't know what that bastard did, but after he visited, no one could perceive me.

That was the conversation he had with the monster raccoon dog that had been sealed in the scroll.

Then, was Cho Tae-cheong, the chief disciple of the former Primal Killing Pavilion Master In Seo-ok, the one responsible for trapping that monster raccoon dog with tremendous demonic power?

At that moment, Cheong-ryeong's voice echoed in his ear.

-...Mortal. If what this wench is saying is true, it seems we've messed with quite a big shot.

-A big shot?

-A spiritual beast. A diviner capable of sealing a spiritual beast is definitely not an ordinary person. With that level of skill, they would be considered a monster worthy of being called a Divine diviner, the pinnacle of diviners.

-Divine diviner?

Diviners are given titles according to their curse power and the level of their techniques.

Divine, Sun, Moon, Technique, Profound, and Conveying.

The title bestowed upon only the six at the pinnacle.

That is the title of Divine.

Diviners who received this title were limited to only six throughout the Central Plains, and they were known as the Six Divine diviners.

‘Divine diviner...’

Was Cho Tae-cheong truly at the level of a Divine diviner, as Cheong-ryeong said?

As he was puzzled, Mok Gyeong-un asked the girl,

“Has the person you mentioned, the Three-Eyed, reached the level of a Divine diviner?”

“What are you talking about?”

Suddenly, the girl pouted her lips and said,

Why was she reacting like this?

“How can a malformed vessel no different from an evil spirit be placed on the same level as my master?”

“What?”

One of Mok Gyeong-un's eyebrows raised.

Could it be that her master was a Divine diviner?

At Mok Gyeong-un's question, the girl suddenly shrugged her shoulders and spoke with a proud expression.

"Hmph. Well, yes."

"..."

He had suspected it, but it was really true.

He had guessed that she wasn't an ordinary girl, but to think she had a Divine diviner, the pinnacle of diviners, as her master.

This was more surprising than he had thought.

Then, the girl said,

"Since you work in this field, you've probably heard of it. Have you heard of the Harmonious Immortal Pavilion[1] Master?"

"Harmonious Immortal Pavilion Master?"

Mok Gyeong-un had no way of knowing.

Although he had learned basic common sense through Moon-level diviner Jo Ui-gong, he hadn't learned about which diviner groups were famous or who the Six Divine diviners were.

Naturally, he didn't know, but when he didn't, the girl spoke in disbelief.

"What? You really don't know? Scarlet-Tailed Old Immortal[2] of the Harmonious Immortal Pavilion?"

"Scarlet-Tailed Old Immortal?"

"No way. You really don't know? Are you sure you're from this field? Which pavilion are you from that you don't even know who my master is..."

"Shh!"

"Huh!"

At Mok Gyeong-un's words, the girl unconsciously held her breath and closed her mouth.

Wondering why he did that, Mok Gyeong-un looked towards the northeast.

Then, before long,

-Startle!

The girl furrowed her brows.

That was because of the very faint demonic power felt from outside the building.

This was the demonic power emitted by an evil spirit.

The girl looked at Mok Gyeong-un with surprised eyes.

‘What’s with this person? He noticed this demonic power even before me?’